

# HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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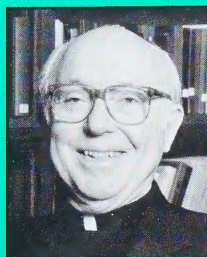
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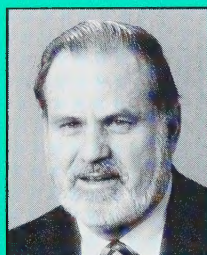
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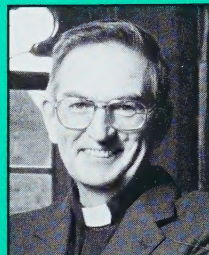
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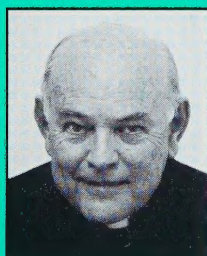
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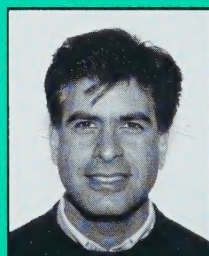
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Book reviews, which should not exceed 600 words in length, should be sent to the Book Review Editor, Jon O'Brien, S.J., D.O., c/o HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (for address, see above).

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# EDITOR'S PAGE

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## FINDING BETHLEHEM IN 1999

If you haven't developed a habit of sitting down on a quiet evening at the end of each year to review the major events that have recently moved our world and our lives ahead, let me recommend for your pleasure and continuing education the annually published treasure known as the *New York Times Almanac*. Currently, in that thousand-page, inexpensive volume, you can find reported—along with the major national and international news stories of 1999—the most dramatic advances in science and medicine, followed by biographical data about a hundred or so significant persons whom God has lately called home. You will discover information about Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winners, those who received awards in the arts and entertainment world, and the individuals and teams victorious in college, professional, and Olympic sports. As a special feature in this year's *Almanac*, there is a listing of all the events the editors consider the most important of the entire past millennium.

The *Almanac* contains, for example, reference to Saint Bernard's founding of the monastery of Clairvaux (1115), which was replicated in 160 other Cistercian foundations within the next four decades; Joan of Arc's martyrdom (1431); John Gutenberg's printing of the first Bible with movable type (1454); John Kay's invention of the flying-shuttle loom, which started the Industrial Revolution (1733); Edward Jenner's development of the smallpox vaccine, credited with eventually saving millions of lives (1796); the Wright brothers' first successful flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina (1903); and the Hubble Space Telescope's revelation of the existence of more than 50 billion galaxies in the universe (1996).

The one disappointment I experienced while reflecting upon the millennium's outstanding events was over the *Almanac's* omission of Saint Francis of

Assisi's creation of the Christmas crib in the year 1223. It was he who, near the town of Greccio in Italy, first stationed live animals around an outdoor, hay-filled manger; put in place carved wooden figures of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and shepherds; and then called together on Christmas Eve his Franciscan brethren and the people living in the district. They spent the entire night, by candlelight, praising God for the gift of a Savior and that chance to personally experience the Nativity at Bethlehem, which the crib made possible for them all.


Why do I think the invention of the Christmas crib deserves to be included among the major events of the past thousand years? Simply because the crib teaches us to cease all our other activities, focus our minds and hearts undistractedly, and become deeply aware of the love God demonstrated for every one of us at Bethlehem. Quietly kneeling before the immobile figures we find near the manger, we can easily turn our thoughts to Mary's total dedication of herself to her role of raising for us the Messiah; to Joseph's commitment to providing protection and care for the Child and his mother as they lived out God's plan for them; and to the Infant's complete dependence upon the two of them, who both loved and adored him. Gazing at the shepherds, we witness a reminder that, just as they were invited, we too have been called by God to hear and believe what the angels announced that glorious night. Contemplating the magi, we can rekindle our awareness that this Child deserves our own best gifts—the love, time, talents, energy, and other resources God has given us to help Jesus carry out the mission he was sent into our world to accomplish.

It doesn't take any special powers of observation to recognize that our God-designed human nature needs to celebrate the important events in our lives with such festive activities as singing, dining, decorating, family reunions, and community liturgies and entertainment. We celebrate every Christmas with all of these, and collectively they contribute enormously

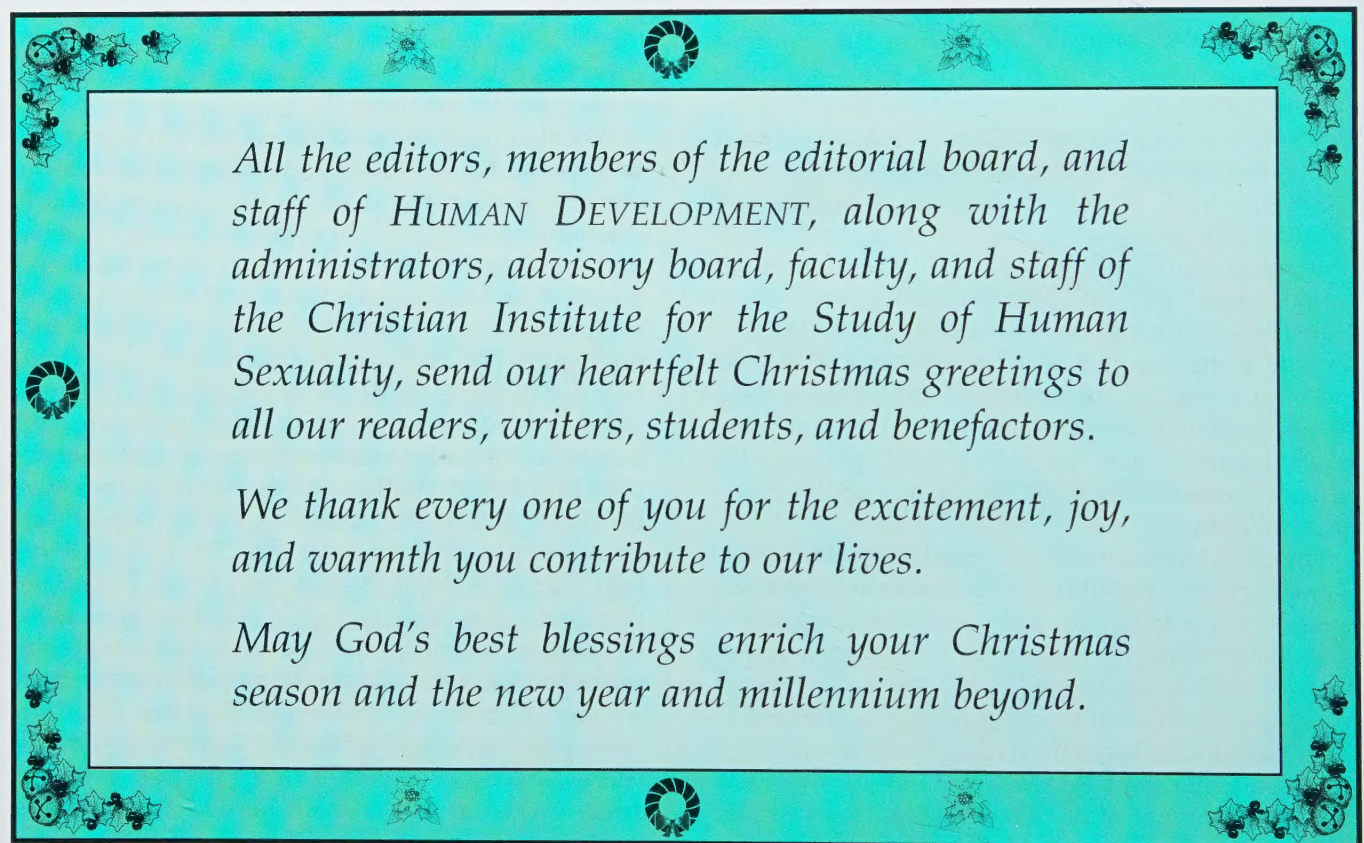
to our enjoyment. But in order to gain an appreciation of the true meaning of the holy season, we need to set aside for ourselves occasional periods of silence and also some solitude. Only in such moments can we give our hearts a chance to feel the peace, gratitude, love, and joy the birth of our Savior was intended by God to bring to us. By its very nature, the crib reminds us to stop hurrying, be silent, turn away for a while from material things, and consider what the season means for us, now and forever.

None of the other inventions listed in the *Almanac* can do for us what Saint Francis provided. He made it possible for us all to experience with our senses the

silent night at Bethlehem. My prayer is that all of our HUMAN DEVELOPMENT readers will kneel by the crib this Christmas, then come away feeling the deep and lasting happiness that only God can give—a blessing the lovable saint from Assisi did so much to make possible for us by inventing his and our own priceless cribs.



James J. Gill, S.J., M.D.  
Editor-in-Chief



*All the editors, members of the editorial board, and staff of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, along with the administrators, advisory board, faculty, and staff of the Christian Institute for the Study of Human Sexuality, send our heartfelt Christmas greetings to all our readers, writers, students, and benefactors.*

*We thank every one of you for the excitement, joy, and warmth you contribute to our lives.*

*May God's best blessings enrich your Christmas season and the new year and millennium beyond.*

# Sage Advice for Times of Great Change

*William A. Barry, S.J.*

**I**n *Stone Song: A Novel of the Life of Crazy Horse*, Win Blevins describes in poignant detail the terrible dilemma of the Lakota leader Crazy Horse as he and his people faced the end of their way of life with the coming of the white people. Crazy Horse himself resists, until near the end of the novel, the forced restriction of his people to reservations. He and other Lakota see the coming of the white people as the end of an age—the age of the buffalo—and of their way of life as a nomadic people living off the buffalo. Just before his decision to enter the reservation for the sake of the people, he and another brave speak with his mentor, a seer named Horn Chips, who ruminates on how times change:

“Big changes come sometimes,” he said. “Skan [spiritual vitality] circles, life circles. Not every seven generations, but seven times seven or a hundred times seven, changes come that are too great to foresee, far too great to understand.” He looked at them somberly. “I believe this one of the teachings of the Inyan [Spirits]: When the old ways are dead,” he said, “it means that a new way is upon us. We cannot discern it yet, but it is at hand.” . . .

“I think we will not see the new way,” Horn Chips said. “I think it will not become visible for seven generations. In that time the hoop of the people will seem to be broken, and the flowering tree will seem to be withered. But after seven

generations some will see with the single eye that is the heart, and the new way will appear.”

He looked directly at Crazy Horse. “The old way is beautiful. We turn backward to it and in taking leave we offer it our love. Then we turn forward and walk forth blindly, offering our love. Yes, blindly.”

Thus does Horn Chips counsel Crazy Horse to face the terrible changes before him and his people. I believe that he also gives good counsel to us—perhaps because the novel’s author, besides having immersed himself in the Lakota culture, is immersed in our culture.

We who have lived through any part of the twentieth century have experienced changes that go far beyond the ordinary. Horn Chips is correct. Sometimes changes come that are more far-reaching and disorienting than ordinary. In such times, which can occasion severe anxiety, people cannot understand the changes or predict them. I believe that we are living in a time that is easily as revolutionary as that of Crazy Horse (or, for that matter, that of Ignatius of Loyola). Our century has witnessed the upheaval of two World Wars, the Holocaust (and similar horrors of attempted genocide), the cold war, the unbelievably rapid rise of technology, and the globalization of communications, the economy, and politics. Because

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## When cataclysmic changes occur in the world order, we must still believe that God's Spirit is with us

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of stupidity and scandals in high places, many of us have lost trust in our leaders as men and women of probity, integrity, and wisdom. Even religious organizations have not been exempt from such mistrust. In addition, new philosophies have raised questions about the fundamentals of our knowledge of reality, and because of the mass media such questions have touched many educated men and women. How can we be sure that we know anything about our world? These events and trends have changed our world and our worldview in ways that were almost unimaginable a century ago. Those of us who are Roman Catholics have seen our whole way of life changed in the few short years since the Second Vatican Council. I believe that most of us have been at least mildly traumatized by the changes we have experienced in our lifetime. We may not be fully aware of the trauma, but it is there. As we experience the tensions and anxieties of the end of this century and this millennium, we need to have some sympathy for ourselves and others.

### GUIDELINES FOR COPING WITH CHANGE

Let's look at Horn Chips's advice to Crazy Horse as clues to how to comport ourselves before these massive, unsettling changes. First, he notes that in such tumultuous times, we cannot predict the way ahead: "changes come that are too great to foresee, far too great to understand." This is a hard saying. We feel that we, or at least those in charge, must be able to understand what is happening and know where we are going. Otherwise, we feel lost and disoriented. In addition, we want clarity about the future and some

control over it. In fact, however, no human being in history has had clarity and control with regard to the future. The future, precisely as future, is unknowable. In all ages, not only in times of great change, men and women have had to walk forward into the future with hope and trust, not knowing precisely how things would turn out. This is all the more true in times such as those that confronted Crazy Horse and those that confront us. It might help to realize that Jesus of Nazareth himself had to go to his death on the cross in faith and hope and love, not knowing how, but trusting that his Father would bring light out of this darkness: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

Horn Chips says: "When the old ways are dead, it means that a new way is upon us. We cannot discern it yet, but it is at hand." This teaching of the Inyan (Spirits) is compatible with Judeo-Christian faith in a creator God whose Spirit acts in history. We are experiencing the demise of our social, cultural, and religious ways of life. The old ways are dead. We must trust that our God is ever acting to bring about our salvation. In fact, we can take comfort in our Christian belief that no matter what it looks like, God has done all that is needful for the salvation of the world in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. We are an Easter people who believe that this world, because of its physical, biological, psychological, social, and spiritual ties with Jesus of Nazareth, is divinized, is inextricably united with the triune God. When cataclysmic changes occur in the world order, we must still believe that God's Spirit is with us, as Jesus promised: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13). So when the old ways are dead, it means that a new way is upon us, even though we cannot discern it yet. This new way, however, will be consistent with what God has already accomplished through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and the sending of the Spirit.

"I think we will not see the new way," Horn Chips states. "I think it will not become visible for seven generations. In that time the hoop of the people will seem to be broken, and the flowering tree will seem to be withered." He is telling Crazy Horse that the new way will not be discernible in their lifetime—indeed, not for many lifetimes. Moreover, it will seem that all is lost.

### FAITH IS ESSENTIAL

In our day, many are tempted to despair. What have the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus actually accomplished as far as inaugurating the rule or kingship of God? The horrors that the twentieth

century has spawned make it difficult to believe that God's Spirit, the rule of peace and justice, is alive and active in our world. Indeed, it can seem as though God's plan has been thwarted, that God's kingdom has failed. "But," someone may argue, "God's rule is hidden and supernatural. It will only come about at the end of time in a cataclysmic judgment, in which the just shall be rewarded and the wicked punished."

This kind of otherworldly salvation, however, does not give much solace, nor does it do justice to the teaching and ministry of Jesus. He seems to have believed that the rule of God, which he inaugurated through his teaching and ministry, had something to do with the world as he knew it: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them" (Luke 7:22). I do not believe that theories of another, supernatural realm, different from our own universe, fit with what Jesus preached and promised. In addition, such theories are not finally comforting or helpful; they will not assuage the anxieties that gnaw at the edges of our consciousness. The only way forward, I believe, is to allow these anxieties to rise into consciousness, to recognize that we are often near despair at the condition of our world and do wonder what God's coming to rule could possibly mean. It is at such times as this that our faith is tested. Do we believe in God, or do we not?

When I entered the Society of Jesus in 1950, I almost did not need faith in God. The Roman Catholic Church and the Society of Jesus were thriving; seminaries and novitiates were packed; churches, schools, and retreat houses were being built and expanded at an unprecedented rate. We could believe in the success of the work of our hands without even being aware of it; we could believe in the Church and, for Jesuits, in the Society of Jesus. But in the eighties and nineties, with the full onset of diminishment in the number of clergy and religious, we were faced with whether we really believed in God and in God's action in our world. I believe that we need to face the diminishment in order to know what faith in God really means. Just as Abraham had to believe that God would be faithful to his promises about Isaac even as he got ready to sacrifice him, just as Jesus had to believe that God would save Israel and the world through the shipwreck of his crucifixion, so too we are called to believe that God's Spirit is still active in this world, in spite of appearances, and that God will reveal the new way to those who remain faithful.

"After seven generations," says Horn Chips, "some will see with the single eye that is the heart, and the

new way will appear." This is our hope and our faith. We must believe that the new way to be a people of the Resurrection in the changed circumstances of our age will be revealed to spiritually discerning men and women in time. Moreover, we must continually beg God to help us "see with the single eye that is the heart"—that is, to have discerning hearts, hearts that are disciplined enough to be able to discover the "rumor of angels" in these dark times. The new way may not be discerned in our time, but we must try to be alert for signs of its coming to birth.

"The old way is beautiful," observes Horn Chips. "we turn backward to it, and in taking leave we offer it our love." This is not easy advice to accept. To follow it is to accept that the old way is really dead, no longer works. When a way of life is threatened, we become anxious—sometimes very anxious. This way of life has given meaning to our lives, has sustained us through the ups and downs of life. Not only that; it has also sustained our parents and grandparents and all those who have gone before us in our countries as well as in our churches and congregations. To admit that this way of life no longer works threatens our very selves and raises questions about the traditions handed down to us. There are at least two tempting stances we can take toward such a threat. We can hold onto the old way for dear life, as though our very souls were at risk. For a long time Crazy Horse took this path. Or we can denigrate the old way, finding it benighted, naive, oppressive, or worse. Some of the Lakota leaders took this path.

The first stance, carried to excess, leads to nostalgia, an idealization of the past, and efforts to achieve its restoration. This "traditionalist" stance, which seems to have been taken by Archbishop Lefevre and his followers, led to their estrangement from the Roman Catholic Church. It is a stance taken with some degree of belligerence by many Christians who have not left their churches. Before we "write off" people who adopt this stance, we might examine our own reactions to the great upheavals in our world and in our churches in the last thirty years. I, for one, can own up to experiencing at least occasional bouts of anxiety and doubt as I abandoned past practices of Roman Catholic piety—feelings prompted by the thought that I might be acting contrary to God's desire and design. Anxiety and doubt can lead to adopting the traditionalist stance.

The second stance, that of denigrating the old way, is no less a temptation and no less a way to deal with the anxieties brought on by the death of a way of life. Carried to excess, it leads to a wallowing in stories of the horrors of the past, bitter resentment, and alienation from one's roots. Some former Catholics seem

to be stuck in this stance. Again, before we “write off” people who take this stance, let’s look into our own hearts. I have to admit that I have found in myself tendencies toward this stance and have engaged in the telling of horror stories. Doesn’t this stance underlie a kind of hidden delectation at stories of scandal in the ranks of church leaders? It is not easy to follow Horn Chips’s advice—that is, to recognize that the old way of life is indeed dead or dying, yet also to love it.

To move forward in faith, hope, and love, however, it is necessary to be able to follow that advice. I am reminded of Erik Erikson’s final stage of development, which he characterizes as the crisis between despair and wisdom. Despair rises because we cannot accept the reality of who we are and who we have become. Wisdom means, as Erikson notes in *Childhood and Society*, “the acceptance of one’s one and only life cycle as something that had to be and that, by necessity, permitted of no substitutions: it thus means a new, a different love of one’s parents.” It is important, I believe, to understand what Erikson is getting at. If, finally, I accept who I now am, warts and all, then I have accepted all that has happened to me and all that I have done in life, the good and the bad, because I am the product of everything that has happened to me and all that I have done. Moreover, I have also accepted my ancestry, all the saints and sinners who have contributed to who I am and to what I have become; I have accepted the ways of life that have influenced my ancestors and myself, with all their shortcomings and strong points.

The church came to such wisdom when it coined the phrase “O happy fault” to describe the sin of our first parents—a phrase sung during the Exultet at the Holy Saturday liturgy. I believe that this wisdom shines in the words of the resurrected Jesus to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus: “Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:26). Jesus would not be the Messiah he now is if he had not

suffered as he did. This does not mean that God decreed that the Messiah must suffer in this way; rather, it means that he would be a different Messiah if things had happened differently—if, for example, Israel had repented and believed the good news. To be who he now is, Jesus had to undergo the passion. If we can attain or, rather, be given the grace of attaining such wisdom, then we can look back at our past way of life with love and take leave of it with love. If we are granted this grace, we will be freed from the debilitating resentment and anxiety that characterize us when we take either of the two stances described earlier.

## LOOK BACK WITH LOVE

Horn Chips says, “We turn forward and walk forth blindly, offering our love. Yes, blindly.” If, in our hearts, we are able to say that the old way is beautiful with all its limitations and even though it is now dead, we will be able to follow this advice. Because the old ways of life of our country and our church are now over, we must seek new ways. But the new ways must be discerned in the midst of the chaos of the demise of the old ways of life. If we have taken leave of the old ways with love, we will have more love in our hearts than fear and resentment as we face the future. Moreover, we will trust that God’s Spirit, which has guided not only our individual paths but also the paths of the universe with love and wisdom, will continue to guide us as individuals and as a people. With this wisdom, we will be relatively free of idols. We do not idolize our nation or our church. But because we have been given the grace to look at the past with love, we can also love our nation and our church without making them into objects of worship. Moreover, we will be less prone to demonize those who cannot see things as we do. Horn Chips’s advice to Crazy Horse can, I hope, help us navigate the difficult passage from the past into the unknown future that faces us at the end of the twentieth century.

# Curing the Clutter Addiction

*Suzanne Mayer, I.H.M., Ph.D.*

**O**n an old radio program that has now passed into media archives, the title character, Fibber McGee, with his beloved wife, Molly, possessed a closet that became a feature of each show. With every groaning opening of the closet door, a landslide of items would spill forth, accompanied by the sound and fury of crashing noises. When I was growing up, my family too had a Fibber McGee closet—a large one in the dining room. It was extremely deep; you needed a chair to reach even into the middle of the shelves. Parts of that closet's dark recesses held objects that never saw the light. About five years ago, in preparation for a possible move by my parents out of the home in which they had lived for almost fifty years, I began to clean out "Old Fibber." In the farthest corners were some treasures: coins from when my father had served in the South Pacific during World War II, old report cards and other memorabilia from when my sisters and I were in grade school, even some classic sports cards. But by and large, the most frequently found objects were junk—parts of cameras, dead batteries, broken pencils, dried-out pens, and the like. While it is probably true that almost every family has its own version of the Fibber McGee closet in an attic crawl-space, a cellar corner, or even an actual closet, few hold the allure of a C.S. Lewis entrance into fantasy.

Most contain what ours did: junk, trash, and throw-aways.

However, it is not with family storehouses that these reflections on clutter focus, but on the storing and stashing done by some individuals in religious communities, to such a degree that their habitual clutter borders on or even reaches a highly dysfunctional level. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fourth edition (DSM-IV), in an attempt to define the probably indefinable, notes that a mental disorder is diagnosed as such when there exists evidence of "present distress or disability, as in impairment in one or more important areas of functioning." Perhaps we have all witnessed cluttering and collecting to such a degree that a person's lifestyle is markedly impaired and wondered how and why this happens. It would seem an especially valid conundrum among religious—who, as one friend recalled recently, often left the house of formation to begin communal living with "one not very large suitcase."

Several years ago, I was invited by a friend to help her pack up one of the houses in our community from which we needed to withdraw. She was one of several sisters in residence, none of whom had lived within that particular local convent for more than five years. The job of sorting, packing, and labeling the

materials to be distributed to other houses became my job. At first overwhelmed with the size of my task in this house that had once been home to ten or more sisters at a time, I soon began to welcome its simplicity. I had only to pack several rooms full of communally shared items. One sister in residence had to tackle floors of her own personal goods: from attic rafters to cellar depths, she had shelves and closets, garment bags and boxes, trunks and footlockers full of everything. Along with the usual clothing, books, and papers for her ministry, this sister had cartons of fabric scraps, stacks of bags (all sizes, bundled with cord), old records and outdated tapes, even classroom bulletin-board decorations she had used when teaching some ten years before. While it took most of us a couple of weeks to clear everything out, this sister, working from sunup to late night for weeks before and after us, barely made a dent. Complicating the problem, of course, was her inability (which looked like unwillingness to some in the house) to accept any offered help. When the moving trucks came, this sister still had piles of belongings to sort and pack. A final effort on all our parts was required just to get it all into boxes to be transported to various relatives' homes for her to deal with at a later date.

## **DISTRESS AND DISORDER**

More recently, I have had occasion to interact with and help clients work through issues of excessive accumulation and clutter as part of their struggles to live holier and healthier lives. The characteristics that mark these persons seem to cut across their idiosyncrasies with striking similarity, and the pressures that the disorder of their rooms, offices, and lives place upon them is consequential in the dis-ease they experience. (All references to such individuals in this article are based on composites of clients, and all identifying information has been changed to ensure anonymity).

One woman religious I'll call Frances demonstrated just how devastating her inability to "get it together" could be. As we came to the end of an appointment, Frances asked if she might check her voicemail from my office, as she was expecting information from a doctor. I stepped outside to allow her some privacy, only to see her exit the office several minutes later, obviously distraught, on the verge of tears. Thinking she had received bad news from the doctor, I asked if I could help. She told me she had just learned that the electrician was coming to her local convent to work on some extra sockets for her bedroom. Frances went on to say that she had left her door locked because of the great disorder in her room—a problem she had been talking about for several visits, since she was

due to move to another floor as part of the house's remodeling. "There is no one I can ask to open that door and make a pathway for the electrician through my mess without being mortified," she explained. "The only sister I would trust to go in isn't at home, and if Sister Mary (the local coordinator) ever sees it, I and probably everyone else in the congregation will hear about the disgrace of it for years."

Although Frances may have magnified the possible reaction of the coordinator and other sisters in the tension of the moment, the intensity of her distress over having to allow someone to enter her room was very real. At our next session, she spoke at length about how many years she had borne the stigma of being "dirty, careless, and negligent." No matter how often she tried or how many times she "began the cleaning-out process," even with others' help, she never seemed to make much progress.

Having worked with students from kindergarten through college, I have seen the occasional one who just doesn't seem to have order in his or her genes. While some students can be taught organizational skills and time-saving techniques that help them get masses of paper into folders and piles of projects sorted and scheduled, a few just never seem to grasp the process. But what Frances was wrestling with, and what several other of my clients suffer through, is categorically different. Disorganization and disarray are problematic and can hamper industry and achievement, but creation of a world of chaos built out of bits and pieces that a person cannot let go of is far worse.

Well-suited to fit into the spectrum of obsessive-compulsive behaviors, *clutter addiction* is an out-of-control need to accumulate things. This term, which operationalizes the need that some people have to surround themselves with stuff, comes from a current bestseller—Suze Orman's interesting and encompassing book *The Courage to Be Rich: Creating a Life of Material and Spiritual Abundance*. In her third chapter, Orman reflects that a major obstacle to a life of vibrancy, generosity, and creativity is "the sheer volume of items in your life that you no longer value and no longer need." She remarks on the irony that a whole industry, producing items ranging from storage units to closet organizers, has arisen to help us manage the things in our life. Even more insightfully, Orman speaks of lives, careers, and even families devastated by the lack of clarity and vision that marks a life in which "more is never enough." She tells of businesspeople who lose huge profits when their fax machines are disconnected because of misplaced phone bills that went unpaid; of parents whose children are constantly ill-prepared for school, missing important communications or assignments

because Mom or Dad can't find them in the household mess; of personal lives unraveling because the havoc on the surface is smothering the person who hides somewhere beneath.

Hiding may be what those who suffer from clutter addiction are really pursuing. Orman notes that "emotional obstacles—shame, fear, anger" are the real roots of this problem that prevents people from enjoying "a rich and radiantly abundant life . . . one in which there is always room for more to come." When individuals have every corner piled with stuff, it is impossible to see clearly, and that may be the hook in the addiction. What is it that these sufferers from too much stuff might be evading? Sebastian Moore, in his book *The Inner Loneliness*, suggests that most addictions really involve a kind of desperate longing to fill the holes in the soul. The existential loneliness that can lead us to search for the "one thing necessary" can be displaced onto more creaturely cravings: "People try to fulfill *with each other* the insatiable requirement of the inner loneliness," and when this fails, they turn their affections and appetites to things, possessions, games, professionalism, achievement, work, or even constant television viewing.

## ORIGINS OF CLUTTER ADDICTION

In an attempt to foster the understanding and motivation to change that must underlie any concerted effort to replace chaos with clarity and transform clutter into potential space for "holy ground," both internal and external, we must look for the source of this craving for things. Barbara Fiand, in her book *Living the Vision*, explores some barriers to maturity among contemporary religious and gives a clue to the origins of clutter addiction:

Many religious . . . developed in their early years of life concernedful attention to their elders in order to get what little love they could. Their legitimate needs, however, were never met. They became like sponges, absorbing the pain of others while their own longing for love remained like an open wound.

In an effort to fill this gaping hole, she sees religious turning to the various compulsions that Moore enunciates, including those for things, replacing the integrity of the vowed life with false substitutes: "Affection that is displaced rather than transformed has us live shallow and dehydrated lives surrounded by the inconsequential. We lack the passion of the real."

The correlation Fiand draws between early relational deprivation and the need to accumulate and hold onto things is echoed in the stories of my clients,

who are fighting their way through the mess, literally and figuratively. They tell of histories of neglect, abandonment, and alienation by families, especially by maternal figures. One such client is a laywoman struggling to clear from a small bungalow decades worth of "stuff," much saved in boxes she has not opened since her parents' deaths. She recalls sadly an emotionally distant mother and an overworked and often stressed father, both of whom spent most of their days and nights trying to eke a living out of a broken-down farm. Her childhood memories include days on end when she saw no one but an elderly fieldhand. Another woman—a very senior sister, battling verbally and at times explosively with other members of her house about where she can "put her things and not have them touched"—vaguely remembers little of either of her parents, both of whom died relatively young. She does, however, recall their penury—how they often ate plain macaroni or boiled potatoes as their main meal throughout much of the Depression.

This poverty, both in relationships and in actuality, is one of the marks that seem to distinguish individuals suffering from clutter addiction. Conrad W. Baars and Anna A. Terruwe, two psychiatrists with over sixty years of experience in treating clients, note the connection in their book *Healing the Unaffirmed: Recognizing Deprivation Neurosis*. Calling those whose early histories include episodes of relational or physical poverty the "deprivation neurotic," they see both hoarding and being surrounded by "hopeless disorder" as symptomatic of these individuals. They make the following comments about one woman, typical of their patient profiles:

She was unable to throw these things away even though there was not the slightest chance she would ever use a single item. We believe that this urge to hoard things stems from the deep-seated feeling of uncertainty and insecurity. Everything they possess, no matter how small or insignificant, represents a certain security because of the fact that it belongs to them.

A recognizable part of the pathology can be seen in the vicious cycle that typifies the clutter addict's inability to let go. First, as the piles accumulate, the individual has less and less knowledge about what lies where and what of importance is contained within each pile. Then embarrassment follows as others begin taking notice and making suggestions. While some clutter addicts, on the surface, appear undisturbed by either the mess or the mention of it, most do experience real anxiety about both. Attempts will follow to clear away the clutter, but these onslaughts into the chaos merely leave the clutter addict dis-

heartened and more distressed. Finally, the person surrenders what lies on the surface to other spaces, cartons, and shelves and admits another defeat at "getting life in order."

## FEAR UNDERLIES PARALYSIS

Orman points to the fear that holds the clutter addict trapped within a prison of junk, trifles, and mess:

Why won't we let these items go, the useless items we keep around us? It is the profound fear of loss, which prevents us from gain. We keep so much stuff around us because we fear that if our material possessions were taken away, we'd be left with nothing—and who would we be if we had nothing? It is the same fear of loss that cuts off the possibility for more."

When this fear is recognized and worked through, Orman sees as an outcome the ability to "clear a way through the clutter and chaos in aspects of your life" and find "the capacity for abundance in the clarity." To reach such clarity, she suggests a four-step process that involves making several "sweeps" through the clutter, moving from 1) disposing the trash to 2) collecting loose change to 3) sharing from the abundance to 4) valuing the remainder. Her plan is thorough and very workable for those requiring just an extra push to unclutter, but for the clutter addict, the fear is huge and enduring. For the clutter addict to let go, a major conversion of heart and soul must come first; God's word and God's way must be embraced.

The book of Isaiah speaks of reordering Israel's world by renewing from within. The paradoxes of this ancient book often touch upon clearing away in order to set free. In chapter 58, Isaiah speaks of a new vision, a right order, and answered prayers. "If," says the prophet of right and justice, "you . . . fast, . . . release, . . . untie, . . . set free, . . . break every yoke, . . . then your light shall break forth like the

dawn and *your wound shall quickly be healed*" (58:6–10). Previous to the healing of the "open wound" that Fiand describes is the working through of the "cords, thongs, yokes, and ties" (58:6–7) of destructive, oppressive and enslaving relationships to past hurts that hold us hostage and to present things that distract us. Such working through will not come quickly, nor will the open wound be suddenly or completely healed. Recovering from clutter addiction, like recovering from many other addictions, operates on the one-day-at-a-time mentality. Little by little, as the person surrounded by the bits and pieces of his or her life admits that he or she is out of control, that person will realize the paradoxical truth—that only with space around him or her is there room for the real "presence that will protect you" (58:9). Only when Yahweh becomes that person's "enough" will he or she "be satisfied by good things"—finally filled, "like a spring that can never go dry" (58:11).

## RECOMMENDED READING

- Baars, C., and A. Terruwe. *Healing the Unaffirmed: Recognizing Deprivation Neurosis*. New York, New York: Society of St. Paul, 1976.
- Fiand, B. *Living the Vision: Religious Vows in an Age of Change*. New York, New York: Crossroad, 1993.
- Moore, S. *The Inner Loneliness*, New York, New York: Crossroad, 1982.
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# The Sexually Abusing Minister

*Len Sperry, M.D., Ph.D.*

**H**e had been ordained less than three years before the first complaint of sexual impropriety was received at the chancery office. The priest had been assigned to a suburban parish, where he quickly befriended a number of single women in the congregation. One of these women had just experienced a broken engagement and was devastated. Furthermore, her father had died nine months earlier. Her mother had passed away when she was seven. She was a lonely, clinging person with few female friends.

Not surprisingly, she was depressed and unusually vulnerable because of her losses. Father began "counseling" her, first at the rectory and then at a local motel. Besides requesting that she not discuss their "counseling relationship" with others, he asked her to start wearing her hair down and bought her two stylish outfits to wear to their "sessions."

Four months later, the woman disclosed to her female spiritual director that she was conflicted about her sexual liaisons with the priest. The spiritual director advised her to end the relationship and report the matter to the chancery office. When the woman attempted to stop the sexual relationship, the priest threatened to "ruin her reputation," and when he learned that she and her spiritual director had an appointment with the chancellor, he threatened her life.

Thereafter, two other letters of complaint were re-

ceived by the chancery, but both were quickly withdrawn. When the chancellor confronted the priest with these complaints and the related legal liability, the priest adamantly denied the claims and indicated he would be applying for laicization, as he was about to be married.

He did, in fact, marry another of his "counselees." The wedding was quickly arranged in another denomination, and the couple immediately moved out of the state. His wife, as well as the first complainant, met criteria for borderline personality disorder.

## A SECOND CASE

The new pastor of a middle-class urban parish was besieged with complaints of sexual impropriety involving the congregation's flamboyant music minister. The complaints were filed by the parents of adolescent girls who alleged that the minister had fondled or kissed them on more than one occasion. One of the parish trustees had observed the minister with his hand on the crotch of one of these girls at a parish picnic.

In checking the minister's personnel file, the pastor noted that his predecessor had overridden the recommendation of the parish's personnel committee. In its background check, the committee had learned

that the minister had been indicted for first-degree sexual assault of a minor but was acquitted of the original charge on a technicality. Nevertheless, he was ordered to refrain from contact with minors and to receive ongoing psychiatric treatment for at least one year. Subsequently, the state revoked his teaching credential. Within six months he left that state and applied for the music ministry position.

In reviewing the criminal records, the prior pastor had rationalized that he wasn't too concerned because the applicant hadn't served jail time, and "besides, forgiveness is the Christian way; let's give this guy a chance." The applicant was hired. No problems were noted in the first year, but by the end of the second year, two complaints of molestation were received. By this time the pastor's term was ending. He left the matter to his successor, stating: "I'm not sure I would have renewed his [the music minister's] contract this year, but I didn't want to leave you high and dry without a liturgy and music minister."

## PERSONALITY DYNAMICS

Both of these ministers reflect the dynamics of the sexually abusing professional. Both are the type of impaired professionals who damage lives and wreak havoc in the organizations and institutions in which they practice. The term "sexually abusing" can be distinguished from "sexually abusive" in that the latter is a more generic term referring to any instance of sexual violation. In this article, "sexually abusing" refers to a sexual violation that is perpetrated in the context of a professional relationship in which the violation of a sacred trust occurs. Thus, sexually abusive describes the priest pedophile who hides his identity and cruises adolescent hangouts, looking for some action, whereas sexually abusing describes the minister who, relying on the sacred trust attendant to his ministerial identity, befriends an adolescent parishioner and subsequently seduces him or her.

This article focuses exclusively on the sexually abusing minister. There are at least three types: those who engage in pedophilia, those who are sexually dominating, and those who lead "double lives." Patrick Carnes, author of *Contrary to Love: Counseling the Sexual Addict*, believes that sexual addiction is the core dynamic for understanding sexual abuse. My experience is that this dynamic is present in many but not all sexually abusing ministers. This article briefly describes the concept of sexual addiction, along with some other personality dynamics that relate to pedophilia and domination. It also discusses psychiatric and organizational interventions that can prevent and reduce their incidence and prevalence in ministry. Because boundaries and power issues are

central to these dynamics, they are discussed in some detail.

Parenthetically, the most common context in which laypeople interact with authorized ministers, whether ordained or not, is a parish setting. Obviously, there are other contexts as well, such as diocesan offices and programs, religious communities, and religious-run institutions such as hospitals. For convenience, I will use the designation "minister-parishioner" to refer to all ministerial relationships between ministers and those to whom they minister, irrespective of context.

## THREE CENTRAL ISSUES

**Boundaries.** A boundary is a point of separation. For individuals, the basic separation or boundary is between self and others. A characteristic of early infancy is the infant's perception of no separation between self and mother. In the course of normal growth and development, it is expected that the self becomes better delineated and that a clear boundary between self and others develops and is maintained. This interpersonal boundary specifies the degree of intrusiveness that will be accepted in the relationship. For a married couple, commitment to their relationship is a basic boundary issue, as is each partner's relative commitments to job, extended family, friends, and private space in which to be alone with his or her thoughts and dreams without intrusion. Carrying on an extramarital affair would be one violation of this basic relational boundary. Boundaries can be rigid, clear, or diffuse. Clear boundaries are considered healthy and functional, while rigid and diffuse ones are considered pathological.

Conversely, individuals who have grown up in families with diffuse boundaries are likely to exhibit a poorly delineated sense of self, as well as problems establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries with other individuals and with institutions. Thus, individuals with personality structures characterized by self-deficits and identity problems, such as borderline personality disorder, are likely to be victims of various kinds of boundary violations.

Professional ethical code requires that clear boundaries be established and maintained in doctor-patient and counselor-client relationships. Boundary violations occur when the counselor fails to set or enforce limits on the appropriateness of his or her own behavior or the client's. For instance, a boundary violation would occur if a counselor asked a psychotherapy client who is an investment broker for advice on a particular stock, or accepted sexual advances from a client.

**Power.** Boundary issues can become intertwined with

power issues. Power includes responsibility, control, discipline, decision making, and role negotiation. Interpersonal relationships continually involve overt as well as covert attempts to influence the decisions and behaviors of others. Control or power issues are usually tied to issues of money, reward, and privileges. They can manifest themselves in subtle ways, such as escalation of conflict or one-upmanship, in efforts to regulate others' behavior. The basic dynamic in interpersonal conflict involves who tells whom what to do under what circumstances. Power in interpersonal relations can range from positive to negative emotionally, and from laissez-faire to democratic to autocratic politically. Essentially, power becomes a metarule for all decisions about boundaries as well as intimacy. Power can be shared equally or unequally.

In a professional relationship, such as minister-parishioner, the minister is accorded a power differential. Even if a counselor or minister espouses mutual collaboration and decision making, the power differential still exists. In other words, the client or parishioner still has less power than the counselor or minister by virtue of role and status. When this power over the parishioner is misused, it can also confound boundary issues. For example, when a minister makes sexual advances toward a parishioner, this behavior would be considered both a boundary violation and an abuse of power.

**Intimacy.** Intimacy involves self-disclosure, friendship, caring, and appreciation of individual uniqueness. It entails negotiating emotional as well as physical distance between significant others. In either instance, the goal is to balance a sense of autonomy with feelings of belonging. When issues of affection in a relationship become sources of difficulty, they can manifest in various ways, reflected in complaints ranging from "You don't understand my feelings" to "I'm being taken for granted." True intimacy, as compared with contrived intimacy, requires that clear boundaries and equally shared power characterize the relationship. For this reason, true intimacy is seldom if ever possible in a professional relationship, given that a power differential usually exists. Thus, ministers or counselors who believe they truly love a client or parishioner are deluding themselves and others who become convinced of that.

## DYNAMICS OF SEXUAL ADDICTION

Drawing on his clinical experience, Carnes has described sexual addiction as repetitive, uncontrollable sexual activity, ranging from pedophilia to extra-

**“Sexually abusing” refers to a sexual violation that is perpetrated in the context of a professional relationship in which the violation of a sacred trust occurs**

marital affairs to exhibitionism. Sexual addiction is viewed as a variant of other forms of addiction. As he writes in *Contrary to Love*, the individual with sexual addiction believes his or her most important need is sexual activity and that sexual activity is the only way for his or her basic need for love and nurturing to be met. In his work with sexually addicted clergy, Mark Laaser, a colleague of Carnes, notes that these individuals usually come from extremely abusive, chaotic families that are incapable of healthy nurturing. They view themselves as shameful, bad, and unworthy individuals who must earn others' approval, since no one will love them as they are. Furthermore, although they may possess reasonably good social skills, they have significant deficits in relationship skills. Thus, they have considerable difficulty with intimacy and tend to confuse it with sexual performance.

Laaser believes that sexually addicted ministers constantly search for ways of reducing shame and guilt. He notes that many had hoped their ordination would control their sexual desires and that taking on the role of minister would somehow alleviate their sense of worthlessness. Laaser contends that sexual addiction becomes entwined with the role of minister to form the identity of the sexually addicted minister. He has observed that these individuals utilize their role as minister in an attempt to manage their addiction, deny its presence, and minimize its consequences for both themselves and their victims.

My experience is that many sexually abusing ministers meet this definition of sexual addiction. In fact, such individuals often have two or more other

substance addictions (e.g., to alcohol, drugs, or food) or behavioral addictions (e.g., to gambling, work). However, there is also another group of sexually abusing ministers—particularly those who are severely personality-disordered but do not exhibit other addictive behaviors—who don't seem to fit Carne's and Laaser's characterization.

## SEXUALLY DOMINATING MINISTERS

Unlike pedophilia, sexual domination involves two adults, usually of different genders. Sexually dominating ministers exhibit a recurring pattern of exerting significant control—emotional and mental as well as sexual—over another person. By definition, this excludes ministers who, in a time of turmoil, engage in a single affair, or who establish and maintain a healthy relationship with another.

The case cited at the beginning of this article portrays a sexually dominating minister. The dynamics of mental, emotional, and physical domination are noteworthy in this case. These include the priest's efforts to change the woman's hairstyle and clothing, to impose silence on their "counseling relationship," to threaten her physically and emotionally if she met with the chancellor, to exploit her vulnerability regarding losses of family members, and to violate boundaries in their so-called counseling relationship.

There are several reasons ministers give to rationalize their behavior. These range from loneliness to sexual frustration to "becoming more sexually experienced to better understand and counsel married people" to "showing her that someone still cares." Of course, these are simply rationalizations that fail to mask breaches of professional ethics and abuses of the sacred trust inherent in minister-parishioner relationships. Violations of sexual boundaries and preying on the emotional vulnerabilities of others are never justifiable.

In the past decade, most states and jurisdictions have enacted statutes prohibiting sexual relations, even consensual ones, between helping professionals (e.g., physicians, counselors, clergy) and their patients or clients. Furthermore, related professional organizations have enacted ethical standards regarding intimacy and sexual impropriety in professional relationships.

Are all sexual relationships between ministers and parishioners inappropriate? The answer is yes. When an individual functions in the role of minister, he or she is usually perceived as "set apart," as representing God and worthy of special consideration. As such, there is a power differential between minister and parishioner that can complicate boundary issues,

especially if the parishioner has diffuse boundaries. Even highly functional parishioners who are under considerable stress can be vulnerable to boundary violations by a minister who is "manifesting the love of God" in a time of need. Even when the minister does not function or represent himself or herself in the role of minister (e.g., when meeting someone on a vacation), relationship dynamics involving boundaries and power may still be complicated.

## PROFILES DESCRIBED

Is there a characteristic profile of the sexually dominating minister? There is mounting evidence that ministers who engage in sexually dominating behavior have a predictable personality style and a predilection for preying on certain types of victims. In his book *Healers: Harmed and Harmful*, Conrad Weiser provides a profile of the sexually dominating minister. On the basis of his clinical data, Weiser concludes that ministerial sexual domination usually involves two individuals with severe personality disorders. The minister tends to exhibit either a borderline personality disorder or a low-functioning narcissistic personality disorder with borderline features. While these sexually dominating borderline ministers often report having been sexually abused themselves—usually early in life, by other ministers—they attempt to justify their sexual acting-out on the grounds that they are making amends for the hurt they suffered. This Talionic or "eye-for-an-eye" mode of moral thinking is characteristic of the borderline personality. The Talionic principle is a primitive way of thinking that is consistent with the primitive defense mechanisms of splitting and projective identification commonly utilized by borderline individuals. Not only is the Talionic principle incompatible with the Christian principle of forgiveness; it also complicates the rehabilitation process. The implications of this way of thinking and acting have been described in more detail in my article "The Borderline Minister" (HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, Winter 1998).

Victims also tend to manifest a borderline personality disorder or a low-functioning dependent personality disorder with borderline features. Since boundary issues are commonplace in the borderline personality, and since sexually dominating behavior typically involves boundary violations, Weiser's profile appears to have considerable face validity.

## PEDOPHILIC MINISTERS

Pedophilia is categorized in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fourth edition (DSM-IV) as a paraphilia, or sexual deviation. Es-

entially, paraphilias involve recurrent, intense, sexually arousing fantasies or sexual urges, or the acting out of sexual behaviors. Technically, pedophilia involves sexual activity between an adult and a child who is usually younger than 13 but may be an adolescent. It appears to be primarily a disorder of men. Pedophilic activities can include undressing the child, masturbating or performing oral sex on the child, or penetrating the child's mouth, vagina, or anus with one's finger or penis or with a foreign object. The victim may be someone related to or known by the perpetrator, or could be a stranger.

Usually, the adult committing the offense does not have a homosexual orientation. However, among priest pedophiles, it has been noted that the majority are homosexual or bisexual; only about one-fourth are heterosexual. It is estimated that approximately 2 percent of priests meet criteria for pedophilia, which is about the same prevalence as in the general population. Psychiatric evaluation suggests that these individuals have significant developmental deficits, not only psychosexually but in other areas as well. For example, they tend to have empathic deficits, meaning that they find it difficult to understand how others perceive and feel about a situation. While ministers are more intelligent and better educated than adolescents, they are also more likely to be psychosexually confused, to be defensive intellectualizers, and to exhibit only a single paraphilia as compared with other pedophiles.

There is also a group of ministers who are sexually preoccupied with adolescent boys or girls but who only occasionally act out these impulses. In other words, while they can exert some control over their impulses to act out with adolescents, they tend to be obsessed with pornography and engage in compulsive masturbation. It is estimated that this group is twice as large as those meeting full criteria for the disorder. While these ministers do not pose the same type of threat or liability as the full-criteria pedophiles, they are nevertheless a source of major concern to dioceses and religious congregations.

The impulse to act out sexually with minors can be described as either fixated or regressed. Fixated types have been noted to experience no erotic attraction toward adults and are likely to have been psychosexually arrested as young children. They are more likely to victimize boys rather than girls. They typically begin acting out sexually when they are adolescents, and they seldom marry. Regressed types, on the other hand, are men who find both adults and children sexually appealing and have a preference for female victims. They are most likely to begin acting out sexually as adults. The trigger for this is often a sexually stressful situation with another adult. This type

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## **Dioceses as well as religious congregations and institutions must develop a realistic written policy about appropriate and inappropriate sexual behavior**

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is sometimes married or has otherwise functioned heterosexually. Both types are likely to have been abused as children.

### **PSYCHIATRIC INTERVENTIONS**

Individual psychotherapy is often the first option that religious leaders consider for both pedophilia and sexual domination. In some instances it is an appropriate intervention. In most cases, however, it is not, unless it is a focused psychotherapy combined with medication, group therapy, or inpatient or residential treatment. Most often, a diagnosable personality disorder is present that complicates the treatment process and frustrates the clinicians involved.

There are some different focused therapies that bear consideration. One is the kind of sexual addiction therapy developed by Carnes and his associates, which focuses on the individual's sense of shame and worthlessness in the context of an addiction's milieu. Another is a focused behavioral approach, wherein the individual's sexual desire and subsequent sexual acting out are counter-conditioned. For example, each time the individual experiences sexual desire, he or she takes a whiff of a noxious chemical, such as ammonia, so that the pleasurable stimulus is paired with an unpleasurable and painful response. Both of these focused approaches show much promise, although research results are mixed.

A number of medications have shown some promise, particularly in treating pedophilia. One class of drugs, called antiandrogens, has been shown to

suppress sexual arousal, fantasy, and sexual behavior. The earliest of this group of medications, Depo-provera, requires injection on a weekly basis and has a number of side effects that can affect compliance. A much newer medication in this class, Androcur, reportedly has greater efficacy than Depo-provera, with fewer side effects. Another class of medications, the selective serotonin-reuptake inhibitors (e.g., Prozac, Paxil), has also shown some promise in suppressing sexual arousal regarding unconventional or deviant sexual behavior while preserving normal arousal. The advantage to these medications is that they are available in pill form and can be taken orally. Nevertheless, the patient must have sufficient motivation to change and must agree to comply with the dosing regimen. The wish to return to highly gratifying sexual activity is a major reason for noncompliance. Thus, it is not surprising that many sexual offenders seldom make this commitment voluntarily; it is often court-ordered.

The issue with medications is not just one of compliance with the drug regimen; it is also a moral and ethical issue concerning free will. Can and should a religious leader order a minister to undergo weekly injections or take daily medication to control a natural human process? Some bishops and provincials are very reluctant to give such an order, hoping that some other form of therapy or spiritual discipline will accomplish the same goal and preserve the individual minister's freedom.

## ORGANIZATIONAL INTERVENTIONS

**Screening.** Formation personnel and administrators of dioceses and other religious organizations have several responsibilities regarding ministerial sexual abuse. The first is to screen candidates carefully. Today, screening of potential ministers is done with increasing sensitivity to risk-management issues such as concurrent psychiatric disorders, low impulse control, and medical and legal contraindications for public ministry. Traditionally, standardized psychological testing has been useful, but it cannot be the sole or main screening strategy. Clever individuals with severe personality disorders, particularly narcissistic and psychopathic personalities, can and do "pass" the scrutiny of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI), and other personality tests. It should be noted that most ministers who have been convicted of pedophilia were given such tests before entering the seminary or novitiate.

Effective screening requires careful, in-depth interviewing by seasoned individuals who follow an

interview protocol. This protocol should include a structured interview focusing on the candidate's personality, family and developmental history, and social history (e.g., school, work, and military experience). Since a personality disorder is a lifelong maladaptive pattern, signs of its presence will emerge upon careful investigation. Essential background information on the applicant includes a detailed formal application form that inquires about criminal charges and convictions, marital status, psychiatric history, and a year-by-year accounting of time since high school. This should be supplemented with specific queries about the applicant's theological views, spiritual practices, and sexual attitudes and behaviors.

A set of interviews with the applicant should expand and clarify the applicant's written responses to these questions to ascertain the applicant's capacities and maturity to function as a minister. At least one interview should seek to assess the applicant's level of emotional, spiritual, and sexual maturity. The interviewer will need to be sufficiently skilled to formulate a profile of the applicant's boundaries and boundary issues, power needs, and experience of and capacity for intimacy. When it comes to conducting these kinds of interviews, graduates of the Christian Institute for the Study of Human Sexuality are a distinct asset to dioceses and religious congregations.

Routine background checks should be mandatory. These should include checking for a criminal record and querying the listed academic institutions, novitiates, or seminaries attended, as well as contacting employment references to verify the accuracy of job information on the candidate's application. At least five letters of recommendation should be required, followed up by phone calls to at least three of the recommenders. Presumably, such a protocol will screen out actual and at-risk applicants.

**Reporting.** The days of benignly looking beyond or ignoring a fellow minister's sexually abusing behavior are essentially over. It is unlikely that dioceses and religious congregations will ever again presumptively deny charges of sexual misconduct or stonewall investigations. Media coverage in the past few years has made it painfully clear that civil courts will continue to hold dioceses and religious congregations liable for the actions of their ministers. A development that has had relatively little media coverage so far involves recently enacted laws regarding vicarious liability and negligence. These laws concern liability on the part of individuals rather than institutions or organizations. For example, one professional colleague can be held liable for the sexual misconduct of another. If a professional knew about or could have prevented a

colleague's sexual misconduct, he or she can be held liable for it. While these laws have until now been directed primarily at physicians' groups, it won't be long before they are directed at parish teams and councils, provincial teams, and diocesan staffs.

**Monitoring.** After it has been determined that a sexual boundary violation has occurred, and the minister undergoes a rehabilitation process, a formal monitoring mechanism is usually required to maintain the rehabilitation gains and to prevent relapse. This might precede or follow a civil or criminal trial. Central to this monitoring is a written agreement of objectives for the rehabilitation process and restrictions on the minister's professional and personal activities, including limitations or prohibitions on contacts with certain individuals. Only those ministry colleagues and superiors who have a need to know are privy to the written agreement. A mature, trustworthy minister is assigned the role of monitor and regularly meets with the minister in question, initially on a daily or weekly basis and then biweekly or monthly, to review the written agreement. The monitor also contacts designated ministry colleagues to ascertain the extent to which the provisions of the agreement are being kept.

**Policy Enactment.** Dioceses as well as religious congregations and institutions must develop a realistic written policy about appropriate and inappropriate sexual behavior. The policy should include provisions about screening applicants for various ministries and specific guidelines about a minister's involvement with parishioners, including informal and formal counseling. This policy statement must articulate the importance of clear boundaries and the consequences of boundary violations. It must specify the basis for reporting, internal investigation, due process, monitoring impaired ministers, cooperating with police investigations, treatment of complainants and victims, and consequences for violation of the policy (e.g., professional treatment,

termination, removal from a ministry position). Needless to say, unless the policy is enacted and consistently upheld, ministry personnel will quickly realize that the policy has no teeth or that loopholes exist. Predictably, personality-disordered ministers will avail themselves of these shortcomings.

A number of dioceses and religious congregations have already established such a policy statement, hoping to delimit their legal and financial liabilities. This is an important first step. The next step is to articulate a policy about educating all ministry personnel about human sexuality in relation to developmental psychology and religious and spiritual development. This type of policy is proactive and prevention-oriented. It should specify how formation personnel are trained, as well as how they will ensure that all other ministry personnel are likewise trained. Some dioceses and congregations have begun this educational process by sending formation personnel to the Christian Institute for the Study of Human Sexuality.

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# Be Seeing You, Doctor

James Torrens, S.J.

time to hear a few things  
overlong kept back, doctor  
at the century's tail end.  
ah do you say ah?

I'm anxious, do you think  
because my father was too,  
what with saturday confessing  
and el ojo de Dios

mama's boy in spades  
but i walked some cliffs  
had a few grade school crushes  
sunny they tell me now

my body would you believe  
three or four years slow  
missed the age of fireworks.  
doctor, don't look bored

what'd i think sex was  
the touch sent by a spiderweb  
to the lower regions?  
ah go your eyebrows

and my city parents couldn't  
discuss it or i hear.  
did i commit unseasonably  
against the up-close pleasures?

no way to talk of hungers  
unfed by that spicy recipe  
you served to the century  
that made so free with you

here i add a long coda  
doctor, about the resonance  
that goes with the kiss hello  
i learned in the tribal bosom

**L**ike the moth to the flame, so do our thoughts go back to Sigmund Freud at this close of the century he opened. His godlike standing has been shrunk, and we can view him more in his own element, among those autocratic European professors spinning great webs and brooking no dissent. He suffered his most recent indignity at the hands of Frederick Crews of the English Department of the

University of California, in a blistering attack published by no less than the *New York Review of Books*. Crews made a strong case about Freud's manipulatory ways and his fudging of evidence.

Psychiatry, if I understand rightly, is no longer a Freudian preserve. The reduced status of the master may be a sort of mythic justice that Freud should appreciate: the slaying of the father. Actually, it was inevitable, given the expansion of medical and pharmaceutical wisdom, plus the multiplication of clinical approaches and concepts. Freud's theory of the unconscious, to begin with that huge hypothesis, now looks pretty shaky. It was not helped by the unkind light recently shed by some very public, clumsy, and contested attempts at retrieval of buried memories of incest and other sexual abuse.

And yet, and yet. We have Freud to thank for unveiling that part of our psyches where painful things, by no means limited to age 3, get hidden away and stoutly resist being pulled to the surface. Freud had a powerful metaphor for this latent psychic world. He derived it from his strong mixed feelings of attraction and repulsion for the city of Rome—capital, as he saw it, of the Christian superego but also an immense terrain of half-buried antiquity. The evident ruins speak of a powerful ancient Rome underlying the one now so conscious of itself.

Dreams speak to us from this underlying world, as Freud the therapist came to realize early in his practice. And so he went looking for keys to them. We

don't need to blame the doctor for all the dream books that have flooded this century, nor for all the phallic symbolism that preoccupied literary studies in the sixties, when I was in graduate school. But he did burden us with strong preconceptions about the secrets that would turn up and the disguises they would wear in our dreams. His schemata did not allow space for all the variables, for the true complexity of human experience.

Sigmund Freud, as a physician and scientist and healer of mental illness, focused on that species of living matter which we call human flesh. He was going to look hard for bodily explanations. What he saw everywhere then were the bodily impulses that drive us—the pleasure principle above all, which translates pretty expressly to sexual response. For your health, he said, better not deprive, block, hamper, or belittle this instinct, or it will take its revenge. The century definitely listened. Freud did admit that other affective concerns can give life relish—for example, friendship and commitments to study, ideas, causes. But he qualified them all as reformulations of eros and gave them a name not quite complimentary: sublimation.

Freud also said, of course, that a healthy ego needs pressure from the superego, that imprint of parental and societal norms. This he called the reality principle. The two principles battle in the pages of Freud's classic *Civilization and Its Discontents*. He admitted that the world at large, for its own stability and growth, needs to communicate and even to enforce its norms, but told us that the individual, like a restive teenager, cannot but resent them and squirm under them. This Freudian perspective was certainly unflattering to the mental process we name conscience, to which it ascribes a very suspect role.

Freud did manage to convince this century of the pervasiveness of the sexual instinct within our totality of human response and to make clear the complexity of sexual identity. Is it so untrue or problematic, after all, to locate something of sex in all affection, enthusiasm, devotion? But to make grand opera or Greek tragedy out of this part of ourselves at all hours of the day—to cast libido in the lead role in every scenario—is to be obsessive, which is exactly what seems to have happened to our century. It is to elbow all other genuine emotions and motivations out of the picture.

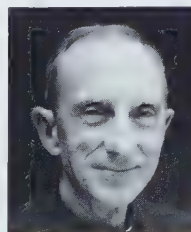
Freud's sympathy for the chemistry and physics of his day, with its focus on the dynamics of attraction and repulsion in the material world, led him to concentrate on inner tension, on conflict and how we meet it, and especially on defense mechanisms. It

led him to postulate a second basic instinct, aggressivity, which is opposite to the binding tendencies of eros. This latter impulse, which often targets our own selves, he came to designate as the death instinct. Undeniably, this factor of human aggression, active or passive, deserved the attention that Freud gave it. However, Konrad Lawrence and others have contributed in a more nuanced and helpful way to exploring that set of reactions, which range all the way from us standing up for ourselves or against injustice, to mayhem, rape, and mass murder.

Sigmund Freud's largest topic seems to have been the ego, which mediates for our good, between instinct and superego. Ego development, with its emphasis on the tasks to be accomplished at each stage of life, flourished under the impulse of Erik Erikson and others but traces its genealogy to Freud. It reverses, to some extent, his pessimistic focus on illness. In any specific case, however, whether ego development will mean true inner strength or, instead, the self-absorption characteristic of the "me generation" or, possibly, even the emergence of some moral depravity remains an open matter.

My conclusion regarding the above, as we bow out of our psychological century, is that you can't get away from Freud; you can't write him off. Ridiculous things have gone on under his aegis, and even when he is not distorted or misrepresented, one needs to take him with a large grain of salt—but he is also thought-provoking. He ventured into the arts, for instance, with an interpretation of literature as neurosis—that is, as a projection of the author's personal problems and a resolution of disappointments via happy endings. He greatly overstated this factor and made a procrustean bed out of it. Still, when you think of it, for certain authors and texts, his analysis rings undeniably true.

In conclusion, Doctor, we have to admit that you have opened too many doors for us to close, raised too many questions that we still can't quite resolve. As your century bows out, we definitely owe you a tip of the hat. Shall we look forward to some meeting of equals in the great consulting room? All of us will have learned a thing or two, no?



Father James Torrens, S.J., is an associate editor of *America*.

# The Autobiography in Vocation Discernment

*Mary Pat Garvin, R.S.M., Ph.D.*

**W**hile conducting a workshop recently for those ministering in vocation promotion and initial formation, the direction of our discussions took an unexpected turn. We found ourselves engaged in a lively exchange concerning the autobiography and its role in the vocational discernment process. Equally notable was the accompanying change in the emotional tenor of the room. First, a woman religious, new to vocation ministry, remarked enthusiastically, "They're so interesting," and then added hesitantly, "but what do I *do* with them?" Next, a religious brother, involved for over eight years in formation, sighed deeply and said "*Another* autobiography?!" Toward the end of the discussion, a diocesan priest, wavering between curiosity and frustration, confessed, "I read all of them very carefully and then reluctantly file each away. I only wish I knew how to use them in a more productive manner with the men I see."

As I listened to the various comments and questions regarding the autobiography, I noted one subtle yet recurring element: almost everyone had unknowingly intuited that there is more to an autobiography than meets the eye. Encouraging the group to trust their intuition, I suggested that we explore the riches to be revealed in an attentive reading of an autobiography. While this article focuses primarily on

autobiographies written as part of the discernment process for the priestly and religious life, its content is also applicable to those written for other purposes (e.g., training in spiritual direction, pastoral counseling, or formation for the permanent diaconate).

## ROLE OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

To begin, I underscored the importance of having an accurate appreciation of the context and role of an autobiography within the entire vocational discernment process. Failing to situate the autobiography strategically in relation to other significant elements of the discernment process (e.g., personal contact and interviews, days of retreat, participation in service projects) may endanger the integrity of the effort as a whole.

As a basic "first principle" of interpretation, it is important to state that an understanding of a person in vocational discernment originates from within the developing relationship between the individual and the director. The primacy of this relationship as a means of discernment highlights the importance of the director's own degree of self-knowledge and acceptance of self. In order to adequately discern and interpret the "movements" within another, the director needs to have gained a significant understanding

of his or her own personality, including its strengths as well as its limitations. Even information acquired from a psychological assessment is always to be considered in light of the director's own personal experience of the individual, never in isolation. In fact, as Franco Imoda notes in the book *Human Development: Psychology and Mystery*, it is generally true that any attempt to understand an individual outside the context of a personal relationship, including the autobiography, is to diminish and distort the very essence of the person, who is essentially a mystery—unique and unrepeatable.

However, when thoughtfully situated within the vocational discernment process as a whole, wise use of the autobiography offers both its author and the director an indispensable means of furthering the never-ending journey into the “height, length, breadth, and depth” (Eph. 3:18) of who one is and wishes to become. How is it that the autobiography offers such a rich opportunity for self-knowledge? To answer this question, the group turned its attention to the inherent power of narrative in the process of self-discovery.

### AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS NARRATIVE

The autobiography belongs to that genre of literature known as narrative, or storytelling. This type of literature assumes a myriad of forms, including not only written texts but also such things as film, ballads, parables, myths, pantomime, and even stained-glass windows. In *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myth and the Making of the Self*, Dan P. McAdams points out that for thousands of years, narrative, or storytelling, has enabled men and women to “pass the time by making sense of past time.” Indeed, at the advent of the Western philosophical tradition, both Aristotle and Cicero were interested in the power of narrative and commented extensively on the topic. Similarly, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, biblical texts continued the use of narrative; in fact, the New Testament's exclusive focus on the life and ministry of Jesus is accomplished entirely through narrative. In postbiblical times, the dominant form of Christian literature—from the writings of the desert fathers and mothers to contemporary conversion stories—have all employed narrative (e.g., Augustine's *Confessions*; Therese of Lisieux's *Story of a Soul*; Thomas Merton's *Seven-Storey Mountain*; Dorothy Day's *The Long Loneliness*).

How is it that narrative has been so pervasive in every civilization since the dawning of time? Could it be that early groupings of human beings just “happened upon” storytelling, and it caught on as some-

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**The autobiography offers an indispensable means of furthering the never-ending journey into the “height, length, breadth, and depth” of who one is and wishes to become**

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thing “secondary” to human nature? That would not seem to be the case; as Roland Barthes contends in *The Semiotic Challenges*,

Narrative occurs in all periods, in all places, all societies; narrative begins with the very history of humanity; there is not, there has never been, any people anywhere without narratives, and very often these are enjoyed by men from different, even opposing cultures. Narrative never prefers good to bad literature: international, trans-historical, transcultural, narrative is *there*, like life.

In other words, storytelling lies at the very heart of the human experience. In *The Stories We Live By*, McAdams maintains that “human beings are storytellers by nature.” Kathleen Norris, in *Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith*, remarks that human beings are “essentially storytelling bipeds.” Stories, therefore, are the primary means through which we reveal both ourselves and our world to others.

From a psychological perspective, Jerome Bruner has also contributed significantly to the understanding of the importance and power of narratives. In his book *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, Bruner maintains that human beings possess a mental life characterized by two qualitatively different modes of thought—namely, a propositional (or paradigmatic) mode and a narrative mode. These two diverse yet complementary modes of cognitive functioning each provide distinct ways of ordering experience and constructing reality. Propositional thought is theoretical and abstract; it is the language of science. Narrative thought, on the other hand, is the language of poetry; it concerns itself primarily with human

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## The responses to questions about an autobiography are most productive when placed in conversation with the director's experience of the author

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wants, needs, goals, and subjective experiences, as Paul Ricoeur illustrates in the book *Time and Narrative*. According to McAdams, the power of narrative thought lies precisely in its ability to present specific human and interpersonal situations in the form of "stories" so as to deal with "the vicissitudes of human intention organized in time."

More recently, Imoda has written convincingly concerning narrative as a privileged way of coming to understand the human individual:

The narrative method seems much more adequate for dealing with the complex reality of the developing person than a purely structural or rationalist method with its formalism, or a purely empirical-positivist method with its passion for determinism. It is not a matter of recovering facts or scientific evidence of a purely objective kind like an archaeologist, but of constructing a history of the person's past that can be related to the present and the future.

Understood in this sense, then, the autobiography acts as a type of "window" through which it is possible to observe how an individual reconstructs the past, perceives the present, and anticipates the future. Placing this information in conversation with the vocation director's own experience of the individual offers an additional means of comprehending the person.

### WHEN AND HOW

During the workshop, having briefly considered the role of the autobiography as one element in

the discernment process and the autobiography's theoretical underpinnings as narrative, we turned our attention to the practical considerations of when and how to request an autobiography. A spirited dialogue quickly emerged as directors shared their experiences concerning the timing of the autobiography. All agreed that first and foremost, the individuality of the person had to be respected. What may be an opportune moment for one person to write an autobiography may not be so for another. This point reiterated the importance of the personal relationship between director and individual. Several vocation directors reported that at times they request an autobiography at the beginning of the initial discernment process (i.e., shortly after first contact has been made with the congregation or seminary). Their rationale was that it provided useful details (e.g., family constellation, educational and work history) in the "getting-to-know-you" stage. However, a far greater number of directors said that they request the autobiography when the individual formally applies for admittance. In this case, the autobiography is written toward the completion of the initial phase of discernment.

While there are benefits in requesting an autobiography in the early or final stages, I suggested that we consider a third option: requesting the autobiography during the middle phase of the initial discernment process. This phase is frequently the most difficult. Marked as it so often is by ardent questioning and uncertainty, this phase frequently compels an individual to search the whole of his or her life so as to make sense of a persistent interest in the priestly or religious life. When the autobiography is written during this pivotal phase of discernment, it may serve the individual, not only in the present but also in the future, as a touchstone in times of indecision and doubt (e.g., during the novitiate or prior to perpetual profession or ordination). The autobiography thus becomes a potent instrument of discernment in various phases of life rather than simply a procedural step in the application process.

### DIRECTIONS FOR WRITING

Next, the group focused its attention on the type of directions provided for the writing of an autobiography. Almost without exception, the participants of the workshop found that the directions most commonly furnished were simple ones. For example: "Prepare a brief autobiography. Include what you feel have been significant influences on you life (e.g., family, educational background, significant relationships and friendships, professional/work experiences, etc.)."

The group immediately noted several advantages to directions of this type. They commonly elicit the creation of a relatively well-structured, often chronological sequence of an individual's life experiences, along with specific details concerning the person's family, education, relationships, and professional experiences.

However, while explicit guidelines usually ensure that the topics suggested will be addressed to some extent, they may actually obscure the capacity of the autobiography to serve as a window through which a deeper understanding of the individual may be gained. Consequently, an open-ended approach is likely to be more fruitful. For as advances in the art and science of interpersonal communication have taught us, the less detailed and more open-ended a question or set of directions is, the more spontaneous and candid a picture of the person emerges. In that light, the following directions were suggested: "Prepare an autobiography. What do you believe have been significant relationships, events, and milestones in your life up until this moment in time? The length of your autobiography is up to you, but you should try to include what you consider the more meaningful facets of your life." Following directions such as these, the text that emerges may ultimately be more useful in furthering the writer's self-knowledge when appropriately integrated with other insights gained throughout the entire discernment process.

## DISCOVERIES ABOUND

Returning the group to their original intuition—that there is more to an autobiography than meets the eye—we set about examining several key components of an autobiography. We agreed, at the outset, that just as every autobiography is unique, so too is the way in which vocation directors approach and read each autobiography they receive. Likewise, although there is no one definitive way to use the autobiography within the vocational discernment process, it must always be read and understood in light of the director's own personal experience of the individual.

Essentially, a fruitful reading of an autobiography lies in knowing what to look for. The first reading usually reacquaints the director with the specific details of the individual's life, which have already come to the fore through personal contact (e.g., regarding family constellation, educational experiences, significant relationships, work history). Although important, an attentive reading of an autobiography necessitates that the director go further, considering not only the details of an individual's life (the

*what*) but also the ways in which (the *how*) relationships, events, and milestones have contributed to the individual's growth, development, and self-understanding.

Practically speaking, then, a survey of the structure, tone, and focus of an autobiography is often informative. First, deciding how to structure an autobiography often presents the writer with an arduous task. Faced with a blank piece of paper or an empty computer screen, the individual must choose (consciously or not) how to design the telling of his or her story. The basic capacity to respond coherently is important and offers an indication as to how the individual may respond in similar situations involving a minimum of cues from the environment. Regarding structure then, how is the design of a particular autobiography best described? Is it logical or confusing? If confusing, around which specific relationships, events, or milestones? How do the responses to these questions amplify the director's own experience of the individual?

Next, what is the overall tone of the autobiography? Is it overly optimistic or pessimistic? Or does the tone fluctuate appropriately with the theme (e.g., sadness in the face of unexpected loss or the death of a loved one; serenity in having lived difficult moments well)? Further, is the tone predominately self-revealing or self-concealing? Also significant: does the person portray himself or herself prevalently as an active, engaged participant in his or her own life story or as a more passive, detached spectator? How is the tone consonant (or not) with the director's own experience of the writer?

In addition, questions regarding the focus of an autobiography may be particularly revealing. First, does the writer focus primarily on his or her accomplishments at the price of revealing little of who he or she is as an individual? Second, is there an exaggerated focus on the past, to the exclusion of the present and the future? Similarly, is the future spoken about at the cost of a realistic understanding of the individual's present and past? As always, the responses to these questions are most productive when placed in conversation with the director's own experience of the individual.

## THEMES PRESENT OR ABSENT

Exploring the themes an individual has chosen to include or to omit in an autobiography is frequently instructive. Paul Ricoeur notes that as narrative, an autobiography is not the product of some haphazard and random linkings of isolated events; rather, as McAdams observes, it reveals how an individual re-presents his or her life as a patterned integration

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## Allowing some time to pass after the completion of the autobiography, the author may be invited to revisit the work in a prayerful stance

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of a remembered past, a perceived present, and an anticipated future. The present or absent themes of an autobiography are therefore key to understanding the individual.

If the directions for writing the autobiography suggested specific themes (e.g., family, education), the first question is, Are these themes addressed? If so, to what extent? If a suggested theme is not addressed, what might explain its absence? If, on the other hand, the directions were more open-ended, which themes are included? Which themes are absent? Have the absent themes been discussed in any personal conversations between the individual and the director?

The director may also ask to what degree significant themes have been explored in the autobiography. Do any themes recur (e.g., faith life, conflictual relationships, loneliness)? Are there any indications in the autobiography that the individual has “worked through” or arrived at a deeper understanding of a particular aspect of his or her life? Linking any information gathered from an attentive reading of the themes of an autobiography with the director’s own individual work with the individual offers yet another way of understanding more fully that person, unique and unrepeatable.

### EMOTIONAL MATURITY

Growth in emotional maturity is essential to every aspect of human development—cognitive, psychosexual, interpersonal, religious—because through our emotions we enter into contact with self, others, and God. Indeed, as Karl Rahner has noted, “God attracts our emotions.” His observation expands the signifi-

cance of emotional maturity to include not only matters of psychological concern but also spiritual maturity. Therefore, the following questions are well worth asking while reflecting upon an autobiography written as part of the vocational discernment process: Are emotions explicitly addressed in the autobiography? Which ones? Conversely, is there a notable absence of expression of emotion? How does this presence or absence correlate with the director’s experience of the individual? Does the autobiography reveal a sense of curiosity on the part of the writer about his or her own inner life?

How have joy and happiness been expressed? What attitude has the individual adopted in the face of suffering? Does the autobiography reveal any cues as to how the individual has lived the dynamic tension between satisfaction and renunciation in his or her life? How has the person responded to periods of frustration and disappointment at various stages of life?

In summary, an exploration of the emotional life of an individual seeks not primarily signs of emotional maturity fully attained, but indications of the writer’s capacity to engage and to communicate with the universe within. The maturing adult’s task is to enter into conversation with his or her emotions, learning how to discern their appropriate expression in each and every circumstance of life. As a window through which the person’s experiences of his or her emotional life may be observed, the autobiography offers indications of the capacity for future growth and development in emotional maturity.

### RELATIONAL CAPACITY

To be human is to be in relationship; this is an inescapable component of life. An individual’s capacity to relate maturely develops over time through an almost countless number of interactions with others. Once again, an autobiography serves as a window through which this development (never smooth and serene) may be observed. Mature relationships are of considerable importance in the consecrated life if community is truly to be a “God enlightened space” (*Vita Consecrata* 42). Without fail, community life furnishes daily experiences of friction and disagreement, which are often magnified by the presence of immaturity in interpersonal relationships.

When exploring an autobiography for indications of an individual’s capacity for relationship, the following questions are pertinent: What are the significant relationships presented in the autobiography? What is the emotional tone of each (e.g., trusting, competitive, indifferent)? Are the characters in the autobiography described with appropriate depth and

differentiation or reported superficially? Has the individual been involved in stable, enduring relationships or a stream of short-lived relationships? Are friendships discussed? How are friends portrayed (e.g., physically, or in terms of what they have to offer the individual, or by virtue of their gifts and talents)? Are any difficult relationships mentioned? If so, how does the author portray the individuals involved (e.g., all-good / all-bad or in a fairly balanced manner)? Does the author demonstrate any insights into his or her own manner of relating to others? Finally, upon reflection, what is the director's own experience of relating with the individual?

## VOCATION DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE

One important but frequently overlooked element in an attentive reading of any autobiography is the reader's personal response to the material presented. Questions such as the following often provide valuable insights: As I read the autobiography, what spontaneous thoughts and feelings does the text elicit from me? Does what I read resonate with my own experience of the individual so far? Are there any discrepancies? Did I experience any "ah-hah!" moments that shed much-needed light on my observations of the individual as, for instance, overly reserved or domineering or self-centered? What additional emotions, thoughts, insights, and questions arise, now that I have finished reading the autobiography? How will these reflections help both myself and the individual in the next phases of the vocational discernment process?

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus encourages us: "Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you" (7:7-8). So it is with an attentive reading of an autobiography. The more interaction between the text and the reader, the more there is to be gained. The depth of the asking, seeking, and finding of a more comprehensive understanding of the person is always influenced by the relationship that has developed between the author and the vocation director. The autobiography is more than a tale; it is the "natural packaging" that reveals how the relationships, events, and milestones of a person's life have been meaningful in the creation of the individual who currently involves himself or herself in the vocational discernment process.

## FUTURE USES OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The final point considered by the vocation directors and initial formation personnel dealt with possible future uses of an autobiography. This discussion

harkened back to the comment made earlier in the day: "I read all of them very carefully and then reluctantly file them away. I only wish I knew how to use them in a more productive manner with the men I see." If the autobiography has been written somewhere in the middle (and frequently the most difficult) phase of the initial discernment process, there are numerous ways in which it may be useful prior to the individual's formal application to the congregation or seminary.

Of the numerous ideas discussed, the following seemed to offer the greatest opportunity for furthering the never-ending journey into the "height, length, breadth, and depth" (Eph. 3:18) of who one is and who one wishes to become. After reading the autobiography, the director may find it advantageous to ask the individual, at a future meeting, about the experience of writing it. How does the person recall that experience—as an exercise that inspired a sense of adventure and curiosity, or a burdensome and invasive chore? What is the person's understanding of this experience? Since the completion of the autobiography, has the individual remembered any relationships, events, or milestones that were not included? If so, what? How does this additional material help the person understand who he or she is at this moment in the journey? If the autobiography had been written at another point in the individual's life, what would have been different? What would have been similar? Overall, how has the individual been able to use the experience of writing the autobiography as a means of further growth in self-knowledge?

A second valuable use for the autobiography arises during days of recollection or retreat. Allowing some time to pass after the completion of the autobiography, the author may be invited to revisit the work in a prayerful stance. Before God, what does the autobiography reveal to the individual about self, past experiences, and future directions? What insights about himself or herself and his or her relationship with God are stirred by rereading and praying with the autobiography? What desires, if any, come to the fore? What emotions are aroused as the individual encounters once again those relationships, events, and milestones that have influenced who he or she is at this moment in time?

As the workshop concluded, the group agreed that the day's discussion, although not an exhaustive examination of the autobiography and its use, had highlighted some of the riches to be unearthed through an attentive reading. Considering the various aspects of the autobiography discussed throughout the day, the participants affirmed that the autobiography offers to both the individual and the director

an ongoing opportunity for growth and discovery throughout the entire process of vocational discernment.

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(signed) James J. Gill, S.J., M.D., Editor-in-Chief

# Rituals Bring Family Cohesion

Florence C. Gobeil-Dwyer, Ph.D.

**P**eople involved in fostering the growth of families often search for new, and what they hope will be more effective, methods of helping those families. So many families seem to have more resources than ever before, yet they are thirsty in the rain. My intention is first to trace the history of family development in the twentieth century and then to discuss what we, as workers interested in strengthening families, can do. By revisiting the notion of ritual as a simple and effective but often forgotten approach to developing cohesion among family members, we will see how rituals can also become an effective way of relating to the multiple communities in which families participate.

## TWENTIETH-CENTURY FAMILY

"We reinvented family life in the twentieth century but never wrote a user's manual," writes William Doherty at the beginning of his book *The Intentional Family: How to Build Family Ties in Our Modern World*. Not only do we not have a user's manual; we could not write one that would capture society's consensus on the matter. We are living in an age in which society fails to reinforce the elements that are known to contribute to healthy families.

The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the end of the institutional family—that is, the tradi-

tional family based on kinship, children, community ties and responsibility, economics, and father's authority. In this type of family, the stability and security needs of the family were closely tied to the needs of the broader society. Happiness was secondary.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the institutional family was largely replaced by the psychological family. The focus of the psychological family group was the attainment of happiness and satisfaction for its individual members. Ideally, this family group, headed by a stable married couple, communicated well and demonstrated close emotional ties. The family's main task was to promote the well-being of its members—not, as had been the norm previously, to promote the well-being of the family or that of society.

In its turn, the psychological family was replaced by the pluralistic family, which has dominated in the past three decades. There is no description of what constitutes an ideal pluralistic family. As Doherty puts it, "The pluralistic family ideal is to let a thousand family forms bloom as families creatively respond to the modern world." In this family constellation, structure, function, and process are all open to interpretation and experience. Society is asked to accept all configurations, including homosexual marriages, cohabitation, remarriage, and single parenting; the two-parent family is just one option. The

emphasis on personal satisfaction is still present, but the added dimension of flexibility is a key component. Needless to say, the lively debate over the merits of the pluralistic family is ongoing.

We now have a society—the first in human history, according to Doherty—without a clear social consensus about what constitutes a “real” family or a “good” family. The guidance of the community and culture is sadly lacking in shaping marriages, child-rearing, courtship, role sharing, and countless other elements of family living. The church’s teachings and guidance in this area are being drowned out by the powerful media of television, films, and advertising.

What is also true, however, is that we now know more than ever before about what makes families work. With unprecedented freedom, we can shape the kinds of families we want. We can be intentional about our families.

### DEFINING INTENTIONAL FAMILY

Families who do not pay conscious attention to their inner life and their ties to the community tend to lose cohesion over time. The couple who do not make the effort to enhance their relationship, the parents who do not invest time and effort to create family, the family that isolates itself from the community—all will follow the natural drift of family life in North America, which is toward “slowly diminishing connection, meaning, and community,” in Doherty’s words.

Today, family members living in the same house often interact only minimally. Interruptions and pressures keep them from spending time together and even from knowing much about each other. The outside world pours into the family’s rooms and keeps people from valuing what is important in their family life.

Society conspires against families by not providing adequate support to couples and to families in their childrearing efforts. Families have been invaded by technology; mocked by the media, or, as Mary Pipher says in *The Shelter of Each Other: Rebuilding Our Families*, “kitschified by the media”; isolated by demographic changes; pounded by economic forces; hurt by corporate values. Children fear adults; adults, fearing that their kindest acts toward children will be misunderstood, avoid contact with children. Our culture is at war with families.

Intentional families suffer all the same pressures. However, they intentionally and consciously elect to create a working plan in order to build and maintain their family ties. They consciously design ways to bond, to be intimate, to relate to society in ways that do not destroy them. At heart, the intentional family

creates patterns of connection through everyday rituals.

### FAMILY RITUALS

Family rituals are repeated and coordinated activities that have been imbued with meaning by the family. If it is not meaningful, it is simply a routine, an activity. Most of us think of rituals as the major, formal events that mark life’s turning points: baptisms, weddings, graduations, funerals. But such daily events as waking and getting ready for school or work can also be the stuff of rituals that bind families. A ritual may be and often is a repeated activity for the family. A trip to the park on the first day of summer one year is just an event—but if it is repeated every year, it becomes a family ritual. Rituals do not necessarily involve all members of the family all the time. Couples who go out for dinner once a week and fathers who read a bedtime story to a child every evening are creating important rituals that fit the specific needs of individual members.

Special memories are often linked to daily routines in family life that gradually become family rituals. Family members may remember saying morning prayers as the first activity of the day, reading and commenting on the paper together, washing dishes after dinner. Such events bring stability and predictability to the lives of children, teaching them what to expect and how to respond. Creating happy memories as a family can build up a rich reserve of good will to draw on during stressful periods of family life.

### HOW CAN WE HELP?

People who assist in fostering the growth of families would do well to encourage families to develop rituals. However, before families can successfully implement rituals in their lives, they need to evaluate and to exercise a measure of control on the amount of time given to various forms of electronic invasions of their homes.

Families have to tame technology. We have all heard that families spend an average of 23 hours a week watching television. This statistic, we now learn, does not include playing video or computer games, surfing the Internet, using the telephone, and so on. When families have difficulty finding time together, a basic question has to be, How much time do you spend in front of the television set or the computer? One family answered this question by saying that watching the news or news analysis reports was essential to anyone interested in world affairs; therefore, it could not be considered optional viewing.

Even this assumption has to be questioned. Granted, awareness of world events and daily news is commendable, even necessary, in our shrinking world. Nonetheless, one does not need to hear the same news multiple times. A third in-depth analysis of daily events seems less important than taking the time to discuss the daily events with family members.

It seems that the more hours spent watching television, the less influence parents will have. The values advocated on the set are often at odds with those of families raising children. "Our children are growing up in a consumption-oriented, electronic community that is teaching them very different values from those we say we value," writes Pipher.

Technology has brought the outside world into our homes, with its emphasis on the "me" and not the "our"; monetary values are a bigger focus than social, family, and spiritual values. What one wears, drinks, and buys seem disproportionately important compared with what one thinks, does, and believes. The problem of excessive individualism, of indifference, of an à la carte approach to everything including religion, seems to predominate. Ron Rolheiser, a priest and weekly commentator in a Canadian diocesan newspaper, notes that "we tend to treat our churches in the same way as we treat our families and neighborhoods. We want them to be there (for when we need them) but we do not want them to make any regular or unconditional demands on us" (*Western Catholic Reporter*, November 1998). He observes that we want to celebrate certain occasions—baptism, marriage, death, and other rites of passage, and holidays like Christmas and Easter—but then we want to be left alone. We focus on our individual values while brushing aside any contrary influence from family, school, or church.

## TYPES OF FAMILY RITUALS

Intentional families plan what they want for their families, and to attain those ends, they develop rituals and activities that reflect their values.

**Connection rituals** offer everyday opportunities for deepening family bonds. Elements of ritual can be woven into meals, bedtime routines, and exit and reentry moments before and after school or work.

Family members need opportunities to connect, to get to know each other, to check out each other's feelings, to help children cope with the loneliness and struggles of adolescence, to impart family values, and to pray together and seek God's help. The following anecdote suggests that mealtime, enriched with ritual, could have been a source of strength for a 16-year-old during difficult times.

Not long ago, a young man of 16 attempted suicide. I was called in as a therapist, and my first goal was to establish a working relationship with him. As a way of getting to know him, I asked him, among other things, to tell me about his favorite foods. He replied as many teenagers would, saying that hamburgers, pizza, and tacos were his favorite choices. I then asked him to tell me about the last meal he had shared with his family. The silence was so prolonged that I felt compelled to ask him the question one more time. He was quick to reply that he had heard me but had to "think about it for a while." Finally, he said, "When my grandparents came to visit two and a half years ago, at Christmas time, mom and dad cooked a meal, and the whole family sat down to eat together." Later, when his mother and father came to visit him, I repeated the question. Their reply confirmed what the boy remembered.

A child needs occasions to connect with other family members, needs to feel secure, needs to know that the rules of behavior will not change from day to day. Rituals offer that assurance. In studies of the family traits of adolescents who do well, family closeness and traditional family rituals seem to play key roles in promoting positive, healthy behaviors in adolescents.

**Love rituals** focus on developing one-to-one intimacy and making individual members feel special. Special events such as birthdays, graduations, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, and Father's Day make family members feel special by celebrating their achievements or honoring their roles. For example, a son's thirteenth birthday presents his parents with the opportunity to develop a rite of passage to mark his becoming a teenager. The presentation of a beautifully wrapped shaving kit to the son at a family meal that includes his favorite dishes will likely be a memorable moment in the boy's life. Similar rituals could be designed as each child reaches the cusp of adolescence.

Rituals are often related to seasonal changes or to times of day, month, or year. In this writer's family, the longest and shortest days of the year—that is, June 21 and December 21—were special days that the family eagerly anticipated. We would get up in time to see the sun rise at a beautiful national park approximately 50 minutes from home. A special picnic breakfast was packed, and off we would go to see the rising sun and give thanks to God for the many gifts received. After breakfast—usually a leisurely affair at four o'clock in the morning during summer and a later, more hurried meal in December—we would drive back home, singing and telling stories. It was something that we could identify as a theme of our family with the structure of ritual.

**Community rituals** are by definition more public. Weddings, funerals, and religious activities fall into this category. Religious practice uses rituals in worship and prayers, in the sacraments, and in the devotional pious practices of members of a faith community. Rituals are formal expressions of the faith of those involved in the action, they offer solace to the afflicted or aggrieved, and they define order and structure. Finally, by participating in ritual, the members come to identify themselves as affiliates—that is, as sons and daughters who share a like faith with all members of their faith community.

As Gertrud Mueller Nelson observes in *To Dance with God: Family Ritual and Community Celebration*, a rite points us to the transcendent. "Through rites we raise what is happening to us to a level of conscious awareness," she says, "and in doing so we actively seek to be transformed."

Rituals function in similar fashion within families, where children are nurtured and socialized and where they imbibe the family's values. Through its own rituals, a family prepares its children to appreciate and participate in the rituals of the faith community to which the family belongs. For example, the simple ritual of thanksgiving around the dinner table may help the child understand the rituals surrounding the Eucharist. Rituals for naming children and celebrating birthdays are easily associated with baptism. The celebration of adolescence at home and the commitment given in Confirmation help maturing young persons to experience the vital link between their personal life and their faith. Celebrating wedding ceremonies by repeating vows and giving thanks in prayer, perhaps during the Sunday liturgy, would be loaded with meaning regarding commitment and fidelity.

In tracing the history of family types in the twentieth century, we see how rapid and profound the changes have been. We note the lack of consensus on values, as well as society's failure to support and guide families. We can take heart, however, in knowing that we can help families by encouraging and showing them how to create and introduce rituals. The power and strength of families who incorporate rituals in their daily lives point to stronger cohesion, more time spent together, more richness in their interactions, and more loving relationships.

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# Ignatian Border Crossings

John P. Mossi, S.J., D. Min.

**T**he passage from one culture into another can be an intimidating experience, especially if the border crossing means an encounter with unfamiliar language and different customs. A traveler might experience what it means to be a stranger in an alien land, surrounded by different foods, music, rituals, conventions of barter, and perhaps the disorientation of driving on the other side of the road. Border crossings constitute much more than geographical transitions; they are psychological, cultural, emotional, and spiritual passages as well.

This article will examine some of the self-imposed ascetical disciplines of Ignatius Loyola's early conversion period, as recorded in his *Autobiography*, and compare these practices with his later-developed Rules in the Spiritual Exercises. How does this passionate gentleman-at-arms decipher and incorporate the spiritual culture and interior language of the Holy Spirit? What can we, as spiritual directors, formators, and pastoral counselors, glean from his conversion pitfalls in our ministry of accompanying others on their spiritual journey?

Elizabeth Liebert, in her book *Changing Life Patterns: Adult Development in Spiritual Direction*, writes about four internal rules of travel that are applicable to the spiritual journey. In *separation*, the pilgrim travels from the known and familiar to a new spiri-

tual domain. In *enculturation*, the pilgrim learns the history, local customs, and language of the religious culture upon entering it. *Residency*, or citizenship in the new land, implies a permanent transition. In *future transitions*, when the pilgrim considers the possibility of moving to a different culture, he or she consults with its citizens to weigh the feasibility of such an exploratory foray.

Liebert, a structural developmentalist who blends the theories of Erikson, Piaget, Kohlberg, and Loevinger, studies how people assemble their world according to different stages of growth and change. The initial port of entry into the spiritual life can be overwhelming and its spiritual landscape difficult to decode, especially if the conversion presents a radical life shift, as in the case of Ignatius.

Joseph Ciarrocchi, a clinical psychologist, presents a complementary consideration in his work *The Doubting Disease: Help for Scrupulosity and Religious Compulsions*. He notes that the beginning religious awakening period of adult conversion is susceptible to perfectionism and scrupulosity. Normally, this is an interim stage. The characteristic sign of such "developmental scrupulosity" is a heightened conscience. There is a greater sensitivity to moral issues, in contrast with previous indifference. In other words, the pilgrim has entered a new culture with a

new set of values. Ciarrocchi specifies that a typical trigger for developmental scrupulosity in adults is a profound conversion experience.

## RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

Ignatius of Loyola, during his convalescence from battle wounds inflicted at Pamplona, experienced such an intense religious conversion. This awakening of religious consciousness set the stage for a dramatic and irreversible change of lifestyle. His reading of the *Life of Christ* by Ludolph of Saxony and the detailed bodily disciplines contained in the *Lives of the Saints* by Jacobus de Voragine added extra fuel to his budding fervor. Through pondering these works, Ignatius would soon pursue austere ascetical practices as penance and reparation for the sinfulness and self-absorption of his former life. Let us examine some of the particulars of his conversion.

At the age of thirty, Ignatius began a psycho-spiritual and geographical border crossing into a new land. As he attempted to understand these religious movements, he wrote, "What kind of new life is this that we are now beginning?" He found the new territory unfamiliar and confusing. According to his autobiography, his initial plan of action was to relocate in Jerusalem, "undertaking all the disciplines and abstinences which a generous soul on fire with the love of God is wont to desire." As his spiritually zealous personality unfolded, Ignatius designed definite strategies to get to the Holy Land. First, he left Loyola and separated from the influence of family expectations and attractive offers of government service. Next, Ignatius settled all debts so that he could be undividedly free to respond to this "powerful urge to be serving the Lord." His immediate destination was the Benedictine monastery of Montserrat, where he engaged in three ritual activities—general confession, change of dress, all-night prayer vigil—that formalized his spiritual border crossing.

## CROSSING THE BORDER

Upon his arrival at Montserrat, Ignatius "made a general confession in writing which lasted three days." Besides making arrangements to have his mule given away, he hung his warrior status symbols of sword and dagger at Our Lady's altar. Then, on the eve of the feast of Our Lady's Annunciation, Ignatius gave his fine clothes to a poor man and vested himself in the simple pilgrim's attire of rough prickly cloth, pilgrim's staff, large hat, and small gourd. Lastly, following the medieval knightly ideal of dedication, Ignatius maintained a night-long vigil in

chapel, with his new spiritual attire of penance, poverty, and love of God.

In this rite of passage, there are obvious parallels with the sacrament of baptism and its attendant symbolism of rebirth. Rejecting his former ways, Ignatius was being reborn into a new state of life. However, this initial stage of spiritual compliance was not exempt from pitfalls and penitential excesses. To quote from Ignatius's autobiography:

When he remembered to do some penance which the saints had performed, he resolved to do the same and even more. All his consolation was in these thoughts. He never took a spiritual view of anything, nor even knew the meaning of humility, or charity, or patience, or discretion as a rule and measure of these virtues. His whole purpose was to perform these great, external works, for so had acted the saints for God's glory, without thought of any more particular circumstance.

Here we encounter an unrestrained ardor that was prone to immoderation and abuse. The performance of exterior penance became an end in itself. Early in this "border crossing," Ignatius did not consider other balancing values or virtues, especially discretion. In a certain sense, Ignatius was in competition with the communion of saints, since "he resolved to do the same [penances] and even more." During this early period, Ignatius was his own spiritual mentor. This dangerous scenario made him prone to ill-informed decisions.

## SIX FORMS OF PENANCE

Next, at the village of Manresa, Ignatius began his ascetical novitiate with a firm determination to subdue his body and purify his senses of any compromised inclinations of pleasure. The relentless pursuit of penance became his goal, regardless of personal or apostolic consequences. In imitation of the Desert Fathers, Ignatius engaged in six forms of penance: fasting, begging, lack of attention to bodily care, ignoring the need for rest, exposure to cold, and extended periods of prayer. Let us consider each of these forms of penance as found in the *Autobiography*.

**Fasting.** No matter what the cost, Ignatius declared a holy war on his appetites. Extended fasts replaced necessary nourishment and wellness of body. At Manresa, Ignatius determined on his own to fast from food for periods of up to a week. Elsewhere, on a long and dangerous voyage to the Holy Land, he took only the required minimum biscuits, and nothing else, as provisions for the journey. At both Barcelona and Paris, Ignatius had to promise his

professors that he would find necessary bread and water in order to have the strength to attend classes and to study. One of the results of his austere fasting episodes was the incurring of a “severe illness,” including high fever, weakness of constitution, and frequent stomach pains that, on occasion, lasted up to seventeen hours and persisted throughout his lifetime.

**Begging.** Throughout the autobiography, the possession and use of money was a serious preoccupation for Ignatius. There are fifty mentions of begging for food, tuition, books, travel, or lodging, followed by the giving away of any excess money. In the mind of Ignatius, the possession of money, even for emergencies, indicated a lack of trust in God’s provident care. This faith in providence was never to be doubted or put to the test. Ignatius recalled his reasoning for not traveling with a companion who had money: “If he had a companion he would expect help from him when he was hungry, and he would thus trust in him, and be drawn to place his affection in him, when he wanted to place all this confidence and affection and hope in God alone.”

**Appearance.** Outward appearance was also suspect and included under the category of penance. Ignatius reflected on this in his autobiography:

Because he had been quite delicate about caring for his hair, which in those days was quite the vogue—and he had a good head of hair—he made up his mind to neglect it and to let it grow wild, without combing or cutting it or covering it either day or night. For the same reason he allowed the nails of his hands and feet to grow, because here too he had been excessive.

The method Ignatius uses to correct his previous worldly pursuits is found in the *agere contra* (opposite action) of ascetical excess. On one hand, he confesses “how great was his desire for perfection, and for the greater glory of God,” but on the other hand, as an immoderate neophyte in the spiritual life, he had yet to find any middle ground, limits, and healthy boundaries.

**Attire.** A consequence of Ignatius’s imprudence was that people of charity and common sense had to enact judicious thinking for him. In the midst of a harsh winter at Manresa, for example, women “very attentively cared for” him and “watched over him at night,” as he had a severe illness with frequent stomach pains that made him quite weak. These same women also insisted that he “dress properly, wear shoes and a hat, two dark gray jackets of a

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## The counsel and guidelines of the Spiritual Exercises are the result of Ignatius’s firsthand experiences with spiritual intemperance

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rough sort of cloth, with a headpiece that was half bonnet and half cap” in order to protect himself from the cold.

**Prayer and Rest.** Ignatius’s intense discipline of penance would become his pattern for prayer. At Manresa, from midnight, he would pray for seven hours on his knees. This was in addition to attending daily mass, the Divine Office, and other devotions, as well as engaging in spiritual conversation. Somehow, Ignatius thought that more prayer would beget more efficacious prayer. Yet who was asking him to interrupt needed rest in order to pray for seven hours? For what purpose? According to what guidelines?

These extreme penances, joined with inadequate rest, insufficient nourishment, and lack of prudence in spiritual guidance, combined to create a spiritual morass of depression, scrupulosity, and distortion in judgment that led Ignatius to the brink of suicide.

Given Ignatius’s tendency to religious excess during his early stages of conversion, how would he learn to temper such religious zeal? In the pursuit of his quest for perfection in the service of God, how would he find moderation and balance? It is an important assumption of this article that if the Spiritual Exercises are studied without an appreciation of the pitfall experiences of Ignatius, as found in his autobiography, then the seasoned discretion of the Exercises will not be fully appreciated. The counsel and guidelines of the Exercises are the result of Ignatius’s firsthand experiences with spiritual intemperance.

It is also important to keep in mind that the autobiography was dictated between 1553 and 1556, after

Ignatius had completed the Spiritual Exercises (1541) and the Constitutions (1550). While these two works reveal his spiritual and administrative genius, the autobiography, along with his Spiritual Diary (1544–1545), are his most personal and spiritually transparent statements. In the autobiography, the mystic goes out of his way to share his shadow side. In many ways, the autobiography is his intimate book of spiritual mistakes. Ignatius seems to be pleading with his readers, “This is what you ought not to do.”

## GUIDELINES FOR DISCRETION

Given these early conversion indiscretions, is it a surprise that the Exercises contain various guidelines, including “Rules for the Discernment of Spirits,” “Making a Choice of a Way of Life,” “Rules for the Distribution of Alms,” “Rules with Regard to Eating,” “Some Notes on Scruples,” and “Introductory Observations”? These guidelines become the framework of checks and balances for finding God with wisdom-tempered discretion. Here we meet a moderate, balanced Ignatius. Let us look at four areas: prayer in the Exercises; the discernment of spirits; rules for the distribution of alms; and rules with regard to eating.

**Prayer in the Exercises.** The theological content and structure of the Spiritual Exercises can be viewed as a critique of Ignatius’s early-conversion prayer piety. The Exercises, which not only limit the use of penance, are foremost a school of prayer that channels the exercitant’s aspirations toward the service of God and world through the discernment of spirits. In contrast to Ignatius’s pilgrimage years, intellect, memory, imagination, and will are united in prayer. Then these faculties are refined through theological reflection, so that the exercitant’s habitual dispositions are transformed to seek the greater glory of God. Here, prayer serves as a means to an end and is not sought as an extreme goal in itself. According to the First Principle and Foundation, the *tantum quantum* principle of proportionality governs the use of talents, resources, and even prayer and penance in order to assist the attainment of God’s greater service.

**Discernment of Spirits.** In the larger framework of the twenty-two rules for the discernment of spirits, there is only one reference to penance. As a response to desolation, the exercitant “can make an effort in a suitable way to do some penance.” Ignatius does not prescribe any specific penance or dictate its duration. Penance is qualified as “some penance” and is to be performed “in a suitable way.”

It is also important to note that penance, as a response to desolation, is ranked in fourth position after extra prayer, more meditation, and a deepening examination of self. The retreatant does a suitable form of penance only after engaging in more prayer and a careful examination of consciousness.

**Distribution of Alms.** Significantly, Ignatius describes the giving of alms in the rules for their distribution as a ministry. Here, too, we find notable shifts of understanding as Ignatius’s mind evolves. The possession and use of money, which was perceived in the autobiography as lack of trust in God’s providence, is now understood as a ministry to imitate the love of God: “The love that moves me and causes me to give the alms must be from above, that is, from the love of God our Lord.” As a model for the use of money and alms, Ignatius utilizes the legend of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, who divided their resources into three parts: “The first they gave to the poor. The second they donated to the ministrations and services of the Temple. The third they used for the support of themselves and their household.” In typical Ignatian fashion, the resource of money becomes restructured, ordered, and transformed. Money, no longer interpreted as a sign of disloyalty toward the providence of God, now serves as an effective instrument to realize the apostolic good.

**Eating.** Rules with regard to eating are also located in the Exercises. While Ignatius recommends a simple diet in order “to avoid disorder concerning foods” (Third Rule), he is clear in stating that one must take care “not to fall sick” in responding to one’s need for adequate nourishment. Abstinence is not granted absolute status but is regulated by the person’s requirements for “sufficient strength and health” (Fourth Rule). Refreshingly, norms of health, strength, and avoidance of sickness replace total fasts of seven days as found in the autobiography.

**Equilibrium.** The establishment of equilibrium in the spiritual life is an art and wisdom that is learned with difficulty. Ignatius achieved psychospiritual balance in a number of salutary ways: 1) He regularly reflected on both his spiritual mistakes and insights in the notebook that he carried with him during his pilgrim and student years. This spiritual journal eventually became the theological reflection foundation for the Exercises. 2) He sought the wisdom of the community through spiritual conversation, spiritual direction, and the sacrament of Confession. 3) The systematic study of theology at Paris

contributed greatly to Ignatius's growth, which intellectually informed and strengthened his spirituality. 4) As Thomas Clancy points out in an article entitled "Saint Ignatius as Fund-Raiser" (*Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 1993), Ignatius wrote nearly seven thousand letters that ranged from spiritual topics, to the governance of the young Society of Jesus, to the petitioning of needed funds and the establishment of endowments for Jesuit colleges, missions, and formation houses. Such correspondence and important decision making greatly helped to expand his outward-directed awareness of the greater good of the apostolate. These larger apostolic responsibilities transported him out of the barren land of self-imposed penances and into effective ministry and leadership.

As spiritual directors, formators, and pastoral counselors, what border-crossing lessons can we learn from Ignatius? Part of our ministerial responsibility is to ensure that spiritual transitions, whether at the beginning, illuminative, or unitive stage, are made with ongoing theological reflection and compassionate balance. We might not encounter a piety as extreme as that of Ignatius. Nonetheless, the challenge for pastoral persons to address contemporary spiritual hazards and perils will not be that different. The best of the ascetical tradition reminds us that contemplation and penance are moderated through service and equilibrium in daily living.

Both Liebert and Ciarrocchi inform us that the border-crossing transitions into a new state of life can initially be tempestuous. As in the case of Ignatius, the unreflective ascetical zeal following his conversion could have sabotaged both his personal and apostolic growth in the Spirit. The contrasts between the Ignatius of the autobiography and the Ignatius of the Spiritual Exercises demonstrate that religious enthusiasm needs containment, prioritizing, and the balanced wisdom of the tradition.

Ignatius, in the Exercises, overcomes the pernicious dichotomy between soul and body that was

typical of his early stages. Penance is not the promised land of the religious journey. Rather, the service of God and neighbor, as expressed in his "Contemplation to Attain Love of God," contains the culminating vision that Ignatius calls us to journey toward. The care of body and health, proper diet and rest, the use of money and resources—all collaborate to enhance the apostolate. These disciplines, along with focused, limited times for prayer, each contribute their intentional gifts as a critical means in the attainment of finding God in all things, persons, and experiences. The genius of Ignatius is that he transformed his preoccupation with physical penance into the world-embracing holistic spirituality of the *Contemplatio ad Amorem*. This new threshold, in turn, becomes the decisive border crossing of the Exercises. Here, the corrective psychospiritual norms of dedicated love and service of God, reflective praxis, and sound spiritual direction constructively reinforce and balance one another.

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# A Way to Update Governance

*Rose Mary Dowling, F.S.M., M.P.S.,  
and Ann Wigley, O.P., ODTCert.*

**A**t the end of this millennium, many of our time-honored traditions are being questioned. For some people, the ensuing chaos has become unbearable. Many are reverting to the more ordered existence of the beginning of this century. At that time it still seemed possible to build a *Titanic* and to conquer the elements. Then it was thought that by splitting the atom, the smallest building block would be discovered. The Catholic church taught that the will of God was done when people listened to those in authority in the church and did what they said. Now, through the study of quantum physics and the rediscovery of spirituality as integral to human life, our horizons have been expanded. Some individuals want to allow these new perspectives to affect the way they are with God, with each other, and with the world. The devastation of our air, soil, and water—created by wars, destruction, crime, and poverty—is so intense that it is clear that what has been done does not work for the earth community. A new way of ordering our lives together is needed to make life possible for the planet. The changes needed can happen only when the underlying assumptions that permeate our present organizations are recognized and named. Only then can people consciously choose values and beliefs that promote the life of our organizations and our world.

## CALL FOR NEW GOVERNANCE

As the third millennium approaches, people all over the world are searching for new ways to govern themselves. This is certainly our experience in South Africa, with the transition from the tyranny of the apartheid years to the attempt to govern a “rainbow nation” democratically. With religious congregations, the transition from hierarchical structures to a partnership model is equally dramatic. It is part of the global movement toward a more meaningful coexistence. This article is for those groups seeking a method of assessing present governance structures and creating new structures that reflect the value of partnership rather than that of domination. With variations, it could be used in any organization. The needs of religious congregations are addressed in this article, as the method was created for and used by them. It is the fruit of formal study and experience with religious congregations, particularly in South Africa, as they have searched for new forms of governance during the past ten years.

## CENTRAL ISSUE FOR GOVERNANCE

The central issue for religious congregations is how to get to the deeper levels of the congregation's

culture. This entails involving all members in assessing the underlying assumptions from which the congregation acts at this time. Once the assumptions are named, the members choose which ones are still relevant for them. When assumptions are challenged that have been held for 100, 200, or even 2,000 years, there is great anxiety. Ways must be found to deal with this anxiety. One approach is to verbalize new beliefs and values and to find appropriate behaviors and governance structures to express them in our lives. Mary Jo Moran, in her article "We Live by Metaphors" (HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, Spring 1998), says that organizations need to develop a shared understanding of what really matters so that new behavior becomes habitual and predictable. Throughout the article, she stresses the need for organizations to discover the metaphors they live by in order to bring about effective change. These metaphors emerge from our underlying assumptions. The metaphor of the machine model of an organization can be held only by an organization whose members hold the underlying assumption that our world operates according to the mechanistic worldview of the industrial era. In this article we suggest a way of looking at the culture of a religious congregation whose members want to make changes in their governance that reflect their current values and beliefs.

Using material from Edgar Schein and J. Steven Ott on organizational culture has proved helpful in assessing and planning for new governance in religious congregations. Both Schein and Ott speak of any system's or group's examination of its artifacts, values, beliefs, and underlying assumptions as a way of naming its organizational culture. Members of religious congregations need to include the values and beliefs of theology, Christology, missiology, and spirituality expressed in their lives. This enables changes in governance style that are in accord with their basic values and beliefs.

## PROCESS PARTICIPANTS

The process requires the involvement of the following people:

1. Representatives of various areas of the congregation who are in touch with the life of the congregation. They need to be capable of reading the materials and envisioning the future.
2. Facilitators to plan and facilitate:
  - the preparation period
  - a five-day "think tank" conference
  - ways of involving all the membership
  - the final event when the new structure is chosen.

3. A theologian, preferably a member of the congregation, present at the think tank conference to reflect on and synthesize the insights raised by the participants.
4. A planning committee to work with the facilitators and to coordinate the entire project.
5. Congregational members who participate actively by receiving the fruits of the think tank conference and giving their responses.
6. Chapter or assembly members who choose and, finally, shape the new structure.

## STEPS TOWARD NEW GOVERNANCE

**Step 1: Preparation by Participants.** This is crucial to the whole process and includes:

- reading relevant literature on governance, spirituality, and theology, as well as material on organizational culture from the perspective of artifacts, beliefs and values, and underlying assumptions;
- answering questions on this literature;
- interviewing at least one organization that has a governance structure that incorporates the values and beliefs desired; and
- allowing sufficient time for reflection in this preparation, as well as throughout the entire process.

**Step 2. Description of Artifacts.** The participants begin by describing as many artifacts relating to governance as possible for each of three different time periods in the life of the congregation. These time periods could be, for example, 1960 to 1974, 1975 to 1985, and 1986 to the present. Artifacts are anything that can be perceived by the senses. They are the visible and audible manifestations of organizational culture and include its maintainers and transmitters. The importance and understanding of symbols in Christian tradition can help in understanding the depth of meaning in each artifact. Some examples of artifacts are the seating of leaders in the dining room or chapel, displayed pictures of congregational leaders, quotations of the congregation's rule and constitutions, how the vision and direction are articulated, how leaders are elected, how members transfer from one community or ministry to another, how leadership communicates with membership and vice versa, and the language used to address those in leadership. All reveal something of the beliefs and values of a congregation. It is important to name as many artifacts as possible for an effective study of beliefs, values, and underlying assumptions.

**Step 3. Identification of Beliefs and Values.** Once the artifacts have been named, the participants identify their beliefs and values. These are consciously held cognitive and affective patterns. They are expressed in artifacts, especially in visions, goals, and charism statements. They provide explicit directions and justifications for patterns of organizational behavior. They also provide the source of energy to enact them. Beliefs and values are also the birthplaces of basic underlying assumptions. For instance, clocks in most rooms and watches on most wrists could indicate that a congregation values time and punctuality. However, concepts about time are different in various cultures and affect the organizational culture. In Western culture, time is viewed as a valuable commodity that can be spent, wasted, made good use of, or “killed”—but once a unit of time is over, it is gone forever. In African culture, time is defined more by what is accomplished than by a clock or calendar. In Asia, time is seen in phases that are circular in form: one season follows the next; one life leads to another. Beliefs based on these concepts could be:

- Time is precious; I want to use it well (Western).
- Relationships are all-important; time, or the bus, or the job to be done can wait (African).
- What happens now does not matter; we will have another chance in our next life (Asian).

**Step 4. Identification of Theology, Christology, Missiology, and Spirituality.** Before identifying the values and beliefs on which new governance structures can be built, it is necessary to address these areas, which are central to religious life. The assessment continues by looking again at the artifacts, values, and beliefs of the three time periods and identifying the underlying theology, Christology, missiology, and spirituality of the governance structures in each. After the group completes this step, the theologian who has been present throughout the process pulls together the insights of the group, expands on what has surfaced, and reflects this back to the group. This reflection shows the development clearly and can release much energy in a group when verbalized.

**Step 5. Identification of Underlying Assumptions.** The most difficult part of the process for any group is to identify underlying assumptions. This is only attempted after all the artifacts, values, and beliefs, as well as the theology, Christology, missiology, and spirituality, have been identified for the periods of time in question. Underlying assumptions are be-

liefs or values that have become so ingrained over time that they have dropped out of consciousness or are taken for granted. They are unquestioned perceptions of truth, reality, and ways of thinking and feeling. These assumptions develop through repeated successes in solving problems over extended periods of time. Important underlying assumptions are passed on to new members, often unconsciously. They are the ultimate sources of values, beliefs, and artifacts. Underlying assumptions about time could be:

- Time dominates me.
- Time is for life; life is not meant to be dominated by time.
- Only the present counts.
- Only the past counts.
- Only the future counts.

Assumptions underlying the pre-Vatican II practice of having a superior in every community have been identified by some groups as follows:

- There are superior and inferior people.
- The will of God mediated by one is more accurate than the will of God discerned by a group.
- Doing the will of another person is better than knowing my own will and discerning together with others before acting.

Groups tend to name the values and beliefs expressed by the artifacts fairly quickly. Once participants appear to have exhausted the naming of values and beliefs, the group is ready to move into naming the underlying assumptions. The group members need to work at getting to these underlying assumptions as they struggle to bring them from unconsciousness to consciousness. There can be resistance on the part of some members to claim underlying assumptions that are not allied to their espoused or operative values. For example, one member might suggest that the underlying assumption generating some of the proposed changes in governance structure is that the group needed to be in synchronicity with society and its rapidly changing governance structure. The initial reaction of the group may be to reject this as a motive for change. It is difficult for a group to look honestly at assumptions in relation to its operative values and beliefs as seen in its behaviors. It is only by grappling to own what the underlying assumptions really are that a congregation can choose the values and beliefs that are true to it. It is then possible to begin to build a foundation for a change in governance. A few other assumptions that some congregations have discovered include these:

- Most people don't know what is good for them or for society and need to be told.
- Keeping the rule earns heaven.
- Participation by everyone means that everyone has a say on every topic.
- Challenging others is incompatible with human freedom.

Once some of the underlying assumptions are named and owned, the assessing phase of the process is complete. The focus then shifts from the present to the future.

#### **Step 6. Naming Values and Beliefs for New Governance.**

Once the assessing phase is over, the participants can begin to identify the values and beliefs, the image of God and Jesus, and the spirituality and missiology they want to include and enhance in their future governance structure. For example, one group chose to include, among others, the values of inclusivity and partnership, which were not part of their previous structures based on levels of authority and dominance.

**Step 7. Creation of Governance Structures.** The participants are grouped and asked to create governance structures that reflect the values and beliefs identified in Step 6. This can be done in creative ways—for example, by employing mime, drawing, dance, or diagrams. If the whole congregation is not present, then the participants agree on the models they want to present to the entire membership for consideration.

### **CONSCIOUSLY AUTHORIZING GOVERNANCE**

Following this process involves a deep commitment on the part of leadership, all participants, and all members of the congregation. It is a conversion process,

moving from what is to what could be. It means leaving behind the familiar and maybe the comfortable, and risking new and untried ways for the sake of life. This process will enable a group to choose the governance structure best suited to it. It also has the potential to help a group's members bond more deeply and live with more integrity. The more consciously deep values and beliefs are lived, the more equipped the congregation will be to author life within both its organizations and the earth community.

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# A Spirituality of Congregational Chapters

*Anita de Luna, M.C.D.P., S.T.L.*

**W**hat we accomplish at congregational gatherings depends greatly on what posture we assume in participating. I would like to propose several biblical images that suggest different postures we could take when we gather. Although scripture is rich with imagery that we could consider, I have picked three primary scenarios. We will visit the locations of the Upper Room, Caiaphas's house, and Pentecost Hall. Informed by canon law's definition of chapter and the insight gleaned from the imagery, I will attempt to articulate a spirituality of chapters.

## **BIBLICAL SITUATIONS**

We recognize that all of us are different and unique individuals, and the richness of the assembly process is that we share out of our various differences. Applying the elements of context, tone, and outcome, let us enter into the biblical locations where persons are gathered. The first image we consider is the scene in the Upper Room in Matt. 26:20–30.

The context of this account is the gathering of Jesus and the disciples to celebrate the tradition of the Passover meal in the Upper Room. All are sharing a moment together, for they have journeyed with Jesus, and most probably this is not the first time they have come together for this celebration during the

three years they have spent together. It is not a foreign experience for them. They are gathered, and although this is a difficult moment for Jesus, he is not isolated but is in communion with his followers.

The tone in the Upper Room is relaxed, with all sitting comfortably at the table, some leaning over it, some even leaning on each other as they eat and listen to Jesus. The room fills with seriousness as Jesus speaks of the betrayal. There is some ambiguity about what has just happened, but Jesus has spoken about his death within the experience of a greater vision, the Kingdom. There is some tension as Jesus notifies the disciples of his upcoming death.

The outcome of the gathering is that the disciples are informed, even if they do not understand completely. Together, they have created a memory that will be Jesus' legacy. Jesus ritualizes his continuation with them with the rite of the Eucharist. "Do this in memory of me," he says. This is an eschatological event, identifying the broken bread and wine with Jesus' broken and bleeding body. There is freedom to be and to speak, even for a traitor like Judas. There is no judgment, even when there is knowledge of betrayal.

The second location we visit is the house of Caiaphas, the high priest, where the elders and scribes are gathered (Matt. 26:57–67). The context is

a gathering of the powerful and those in authority. Those gathered have come to try Jesus, and they sit in their roles as judge and jury.

The tone is accusatory, judgmental, and harsh. The scene is filled with animosity and hostility. There is no room to listen, no openness to hear Jesus' defense. The invitation for Jesus to speak is issued but is devoid of receptivity. It is an entrapment.

The outcome is a condemnation based on false evidence. The high priest facilitates the trial, and the scribes and elders voice their vote in the guilty verdict. Jesus is stripped of his innocence and of his clothing, and the high priest, the elders, and the scribes leave with a false sense of power.

The third location is what I call Pentecost Hall (Acts 2:1–13). The context is a multiethnic, multicultural gathering. Apparently, diverse languages are represented. The participants in the event have gathered in a temple, perhaps, or in a courtyard, or maybe outside in the open air. The crowd has come together in expectation of something that is to happen. There are spectators and participants at the event.

The tone of the gathering is one of awe and wonderment; the crowd must have at least experienced goosebumps. Those present listened attentively and spoke so that others could understand them, even though they recognized themselves as different.

The outcome of the miracle of Pentecost is that all listened to one another and understood, and the message was about the power of God and the powerful experience of understanding and being understood. There were questions remaining, such as, What does this mean? But they all experienced the miracle of the tongue and of the ear. They heard the sounds and, in utter amazement, they understood what they heard. All wondered and were perplexed, and the spectators sneered and attributed the event to drunkenness.

## PURPOSE OF CHAPTER

How are these sources of the imagination helpful to us in reflecting about chapter? Canon law, when defining the perimeters of a congregational chapter, takes in an understanding of two concepts: chapter and patrimony. "Patrimony" is defined as the intention of the founder—the nature, purpose, spirit, and character of the institute, with all its wholesome traditions. Chapter takes its character based on the patrimony thus defined. The gathering is to be a sign of the unity and love of the members of the institute, and its purpose is to protect the patrimony and to promote suitable renewal in accord with it. Chapter, of course, also has the tasks of electing the moderator, treating major business matters, and publishing

norms for the institute. Chapter ought to be congruent with the character of the congregation.

This meeting of the members of the institute, beyond the business matters, is for the purpose of protecting and renewing the intention of the founder—the vision and spirit that are to be passed on to the current membership. The creativity and imagination of the participants are required for the visioning and the goal setting that are part of the renewal and legacy-keeping tasks of coming together. The chapter is framed by the issue of patrimony.

The patrimony of the institute is what we are asked to safeguard. It is the patrimony that holds the group together and represents the legacy of the congregation, which is the substance for a chapter. How to keep the legacy alive and how to transmit it to the new members is a constant question. How the group creatively imagines or envisions best facilitating the transmission and continuation of its mission and legacy is what delineates the perimeters of the chapter process.

## PARTICIPATION ANALOGIES

Understanding that chapter is a moment in our institutional lives when we become the keepers of the legacy and evaluate or renew how we are safeguarding the patrimony, let us look at what postures one might assume in the process. Imagination and creativity are vital to the process of a gathering that invites vision. We cannot escape entering the imagination when we do reflection. When we do theological reflection on our spiritual inheritance or legacy, we reminisce using the memory. When we do theological reflection or social analysis, we interpret through thoughtful observation and perception. And when we plan, dream, envision, or set goals, we are most clearly in our creative imagination.

We return to imaginatively examine the three biblical locations of the Upper Room, the house of Caiaphas, and Pentecost Hall. The Upper Room provides the place for us to listen attentively to the call to lay aside our agendas and to give generously. It makes of the chapter a place of communion, of sharing, of breaking bread, of becoming bread to be broken for the sake of the Kingdom. This desire to follow an ideal of becoming for others is concretized in the mission of our institutes. It is the place of companionship.

Other biblical images that would augment the concepts of communion and companionship would be the road to Emmaus, where the disciples walk together and, encountering Jesus, eventually recognize him. In the Old Testament, the Exodus story is a good meditation on what it means to walk together,

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## Chapters are meant to be structures that facilitate creativity for us and can be channels for the inventions of our hearts

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sometimes in ambiguity, in the struggle, sometimes wondering if we have made the right decisions on the way. The women at the tomb at the end of Mark's gospel constitute another image that conjures up many thoughts of how helpless we sometimes feel when we receive information but are unsure of what to do with it.

The Upper Room and all these other images give us substance for reflection on the theme of communion, which the document *Ecclesia in America* invites. The communion and companionship to which we are called is trinitarian, for we are all individuals, and that communion that we begin to experience here makes of us pilgrims who travel toward a final destination until the fullness of the Kingdom comes. The communitarian dimension of consecrated life at its best gives us a foretaste of the communion toward which we are striving.

The second scene is the house of Caiaphas, a place in which one is very aware of power and authority. The dynamic at Caiaphas's house is an authority disorder in which persons are centered on their roles as agents of power who can do and undo. The scene at Caiaphas's house suggests that within each of us is a hunger for a power that can be destructive to others. It is the type of power that leaves no room to listen or to reflect, acted out in the absence of sensitivity and compassion. The gospel passage that balances this power complex is the scene at the Wedding Feast at Cana, in which Mary is aware of the power of Jesus and of her influence on her son. There is a recognition of power, but that power is placed at the disposal of others' needs. In this scene, the wine, a symbol of joy, has run out, and Mary's request of

Jesus is to return the joy to the feast. She recognizes that Jesus has the power and will use it for others. The image of the use of power against Jesus by Caiaphas, the scribes, and the elders is a common one, and the challenge suggested is that we mediate power for others.

The Pentecost experience proposes a receptivity and an openness to diversity. Pentecost is the experience of receiving in a stance of listening. It is a posture of emptying the self so that we might be used as instruments by the Spirit. It is both a conversion and a solidarity moment, when we allow ourselves to discover a personal gift of understanding and of being understood. We are able to move away from our ethnocentric ways of being defensive and on guard to become ethnorelative in our acceptance and adaptation posture. This is a place of genuine dialogue, where the Spirit becomes present in very direct ways and opens channels of communication and creativity.

Other biblical images that support the Pentecost experience are the various Marian events. In the Visitation, Elizabeth and Mary are in complete understanding of their shared joy, and the give-and-take between them goes beyond words. The Annunciation is a type of personal Pentecost, as Mary engages in dialogue with the Spirit, which results in her complete availability to do God's will. Mary's yes, in the Magnificat, is the outcome of the communication of the Spirit to all people through her receptivity and openness to collaboration, to active listening, and to her final *fiat* to serve as a conduit of God's word incarnate to others.

Pentecost and the Marian experiences of encountering the Spirit speak of conversion, of *metanoia*. To quote from *Ecclesia in America*, "It is not simply a matter of thinking differently in an intellectual sense, but of revising the reasons behind one's actions. . . . In order to speak of conversion, the gap between faith and life must be bridged." These are the experiences of encounter that change one's life and, more important, that move one to allow one's life to be changed. Conversion is a matter not of imposition but rather of participative cooperation with the grace to be transformed.

The spirit of solidarity is also evident in these images. As noted in *Ecclesia in America*, "Solidarity is the fruit of communion with Christ and with our brothers and sisters, for it is part of the fruit of conversion." Mary and Elizabeth found their solidarity in their mutual joy, as the recipients of the Spirit of Pentecost found solidarity in their listening and understanding. Understanding has a quality of building solidarity, as in the various stories explored and in the Emmaus story, in which the disciples understand and recognize Jesus; all become and feel as one.

## SPIRITUALITY OF CHAPTERS

The posture we assume as we enter the sacred space of chapter determines what individual or communal outcome we will draw. The result of chapter in safeguarding the patrimony and transmitting a legacy can be a renewed and a reenergized commitment. It is a shot of energy made possible by the communion of the whole assembly; it is communal energy fueled by the adventure of solidarity through a shared vision; it is the experience of personal and communal conversion in a recognition contextualized within a privileged moment of power for service.

Our communities specifically, and religious life in general, draw their energy to continue from each of us who commits to companioning one another in passing on the vision and giving life to the mission of the group. We choose to take positive or negative energy into our space in chapter. By this I do not mean that one expects the experience to be easy and that everyone should be happily smiling as we live the hours of the decision-making process. However, energy to manage difficult moments is drawn from the inner life, wherein dwells the Spirit of God, who can fuel our imagination and who can awaken the reservoirs of our inner strength.

Characteristics of a spirituality for chapters suggested by the biblical images are:

- A spirit of communion as in the Upper Room, where we are invited and where we invite our members to entertain the broad picture given to us by the vision and the mission of our congregation—the extensions of the building of the Kingdom.
- A discerning use of power placed at the service of those who invest us with authority. The elders and the scribes remind us what not to do with our privileged positions. Power can be self-deceiving and can be misused when the agent of service becomes self-deluded in a misperception and exercises authority against instead of for another.
- A willingness to be converted through an active listening such as the Pentecost event proposes. A cultivation of a stance that consistently moves us

away from ethnocentric to ethnorelative ways of situating ourselves in a better space to understand and be understood. A constant response to be vehicles of the word of the Spirit to others in ways that are clear and genuine.

- A desire for solidarity with the members of the institute as we share communion and transformation. Our institutes are rich in the legacies of which we are the keepers, and in sharing the vision and the mission, we find so many opportunities to nourish one another. The dialogic unit in chapter becomes three-dimensional: with God's Spirit, with oneself, and with the others. Therefore, the experience becomes transforming with divine intervention, self-integrating with self-reflection, and solidarizing with companioning and sharing.

## GIFT OF IMAGINATION

The gift of imagination stems from a God who is infinitely creative and generous and in whose image we are made. This gift seeks receivers who are willing to be filled with hope and creativity. The beauty of images is that if we can visualize how we could be, we can become who we visualize. Chapters are meant to be structures that facilitate creativity for us and can be channels for the inventions of our hearts. If we can experience communion with our members as in the Upper Room and can be transformed as at Pentecost, then we can expect to enjoy solidarity with our membership. From the chapter experience it is possible to reap the fruit of sharing a vision, of changing for the mission and therefore finding new meaning in safeguarding the legacy.



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# BOOK REVIEWS

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*The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* by Ronald Rolheiser. New York, New York: Doubleday, 1999. 257 pages. \$21.95.

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**T**his book is for you if you are struggling spiritually. Ronald Rolheiser proves to be a steady, gentle, inclusive guide. The well-known author of *The Restless Heart* (1988) and *The Shattered Lantern* (1995) provides a profound synthesis and sound theological map for the spiritual journey. In the compelling opening chapters, Rolheiser declares that a healthy spirituality gives us both zest and meaning. It puts fire in our veins; it holds us together and gives us purpose. This sympathetic guide is at his best when he weaves story with theory. He writes with zest in his own veins and with the exuberance of a poetic heart.

By exploring how eros informs spirituality, Rolheiser avoids the destructive dualism that has plagued much of Western spirituality. Readers will probably draw the most help and inspiration from his culminating chapter, "A Spirituality of Sexuality," in which he achieves the task, set forth in the first chapter, of fusing eros and spirit, passion, and direction. A healthy sexuality, he says, is the single most powerful vehicle to lead us to selflessness and joy.

Sex is responsible for most of the ecstasies that occur on the planet, and also for lots of murders and suicides, Rolheiser observes. He carefully sifts out the differences. In large measure, a healthy religion both elicits and channels our erotic desires. It can provide the guide of community worship, the imperatives of social action, and the centrality of the Incarnation. It challenges narcissism, pragmatism, and unbridled restlessness—the excessive self-preoccupation that distracts the soul and saps its energy. Some treatment of the role of the body, physical exercise, and body awareness dynamics would enhance Rolheiser's goal of a holistic spirituality.

In an excellent chapter on the spirituality of ecclesiology, Rolheiser rescues the church from an authoritative social elite and restores it to the common people. He explains that the church is a community animated by Jesus Christ and nourished by his word, his spirit, and the Eucharist. It is not about "like-minded individuals, gathered on the basis of mutual compatibility." The gathering has little or nothing to do with liking each other or finding compatible types. The church is about people standing shoulder to shoulder, hearing a common word, chanting a common song, sharing common bread, and offering mutual forgiveness. Such a faith community breaks the bonds of individualism, even as it nourishes and expands our soul. A large omission in this section on the church is a treatment of the challenges women face in a male-dominated hierarchical structure.

The late Henri Nouwen's spirit and writings inspire this Rolheiser work. In fact, in the book's dedication, Rolheiser describes Nouwen as this generation's Kierkegaard, helping us to pray while not knowing how to pray, to rest while feeling restless, to be surrounded by a cloud of light while still in darkness. But Rolheiser writes more expansively than Nouwen. Examples and metaphors cascade from his pen, at times even leading to digression from the main line of thought. This book is best read in short sections, as a series of essays, because it is not a seamless monograph.

The "holy longing" is laid out well in the opening chapters, and again in the chapter on the spirituality of sexuality, but this theme could have been emphasized more strongly throughout the book as a means of unifying the profound insights strewn along the way.

Minor errors abound in the early sections of the book. Pius II (rather than XII) appears as the author of *Mystici Corporis*. Leo XIII's encyclical on social justice appears in the 1870s (rather than in 1891). And, unfortunately, Doubleday's proofreading was apparently limited to whatever showed up on "spell check." A corrected paperback edition cannot come too soon.

*The Holy Longing* would be an excellent text for a parish adult education class. It is also a perfect gift

for soulmates. One mother who is a prominent theological educator said to me, "I'm buying copies for both my daughters. It's the best description of the spiritual commitment that I have tried to live all my life, and I know it will help them in their own struggles." This book, bound to be a classic resource, deserves such high praise.

—Patrick J. Howell, S.J.

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*Spiritual Direction and the Gay Person* by James L. Empereur, S.J. New York, New York: Continuum, 1998. 180 pages. \$18.95.

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**S***piritual Direction and the Gay Person* by James L. Empereur, S.J., is a highly informative and pastorally sensitive resource. True to its title, this book serves as an excellent guidebook for spiritual directors, both Christian and other, in mentoring gays and lesbians. *Spiritual Direction* ranks as a theologically mature, nuanced publication. It is not an introductory work or a self-help handbook for homosexuals. Neither is it a manual for confessional counseling or an advocacy text of moral theology. Its focus is consistently clear: to provide theological models and cultural insights for gay men and women in their quest to find God in their lives.

Empereur, a recognized lecturer, brings a formidable amount of academic and pastoral credentials with his experiential background. He is founder of the Institute of Spirituality and Worship and founding editor of *Modern Liturgy* magazine, and he taught liturgical and systematic theology at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley for twenty years. Presently, he serves as liturgist and spiritual director at the San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio, Texas. The author of numerous theological texts, he recently published *The Enneagram and Spiritual Direction*.

*Spiritual Direction*, reinforced with over thirty-four pages of well-documented footnotes, is divided into nine informative chapters: "The Gift of Gay Spirituality in Spiritual Direction," "The Right of Gay Persons to Have a Spiritual Life," "Gay Spirituality: Living on the Margins," "The Gay Person's Passage Through Suffering," "Scripture in Gay Spirituality," "Liturgy and Embodiment," "Spiritual Direction and the Conformist Gay," "Spiritual Direction and the Conscientious Gay," and "Spiritual Direction and the Interindividual Gay."

Throughout these chapters, the hidden assumptions and biases regarding gays and their subculture are challenged on a number of theological levels. For example: Are *homosexual* and *holy* compatible terms? Is the special sexual orientation of gays and lesbians a gift of God to help others gain a greater insight into the reality of our Maker? Given the skewed social justice position of many churches toward homosexuals, what are the rights of gays to an authentic spiritual life? In what ways does our societal homophobia exploit religion, its moral teachings, and ambiguous biblical passages to justify our prejudice and animosity toward homosexuals? How can worshiping communities continue to marginalize gays, demanding in effect that they remain silent about their sexuality, and still claim that sacramental life is about inclusiveness? In the exploration of such sharply debated topics, Empereur deftly presents a balanced and candid worldview of the gay experience in the struggle for ecclesial respect, societal esteem, and spiritual integrity. The liberationist pen of Empereur, in seeking a reasoned middle ground, is simultaneously unflinching and prophetic:

Spiritual directors, by recognizing and calling forth the homosexual giftedness of their directees, call them out of their tombs. Hopefully, the journey that the director and directee make together will make it possible for the gay person to move out of hiding into the light and move from unfreedom to freedom. The whole work of spiritual direction with gays and lesbians is encapsulated in the cry of Jesus as the still bound Lazarus emerges from the darkness: "Unbind him and let him go!"

As a spiritual mentor, I found the last three chapters, dealing with personality development theory, particularly germane to spiritual direction. Empereur adapts the psychological characteristics delineated by Elizabeth Liebert in *Changing Life Patterns: Adult Development in Spiritual Direction* and applies her three stages of adult transition—conformist, conscientious, and interindividual—to the gay experience. These chapters address the important spiritual issues associated with coming out, the fostering of an inner life, claiming gay self-identity, the discernment of spirits in a world of mixed messages, intimacy in relationships, and generative public service. For both director and directee, these chapters indicate the growth markers, caveats, and transition stages of persons who embrace the gay vocation.

I strongly recommend *Spiritual Direction and the Gay Person* as a significant, intellectually grounded work that compassionately applies the wisdom of the spiritual direction tradition to a group marginal-

ized by society and often alienated by religion. *Spiritual Direction* serves as an illuminating resource, not only for spiritual directors but also for pastoral counselors, formators, teachers, religious leaders, and anyone seriously interested in gay spirituality.

—John P. Mossi, S.J., D. Min.

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*The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics* by Joseph Kotva, Jr. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996. 184 pages. \$24.95.

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**T**he prosecutor's strategy in the recent presidential impeachment trial was threefold in its focus: Were Clinton's actions objectively wrong? (rules); Will these actions have a significant negative impact or effect on the office of the presidency and voter confidence in the political process? (effects); Do these actions reflect severe character flaws in the president? (virtue and character). Interestingly, these three points of focus also underscore the tension in ethics and moral theology today and highlight the debate among deontologists, consequentialists, and virtue ethicists with regard to rules (deontology), effects (consequentialism), and character (virtue ethics). Many ministers I have talked to recently have noted that the impeachment trial has raised their consciousness anew about the need to know more about contemporary ethical systems and their applicability to everyday moral issues in a Christian context.

Although he does not address the impeachment matter directly, Joseph Kotva, Ph.D., a Mennonite scholar-pastor, has written a useful and straightforward book on virtue ethics from a Christian perspective. His purpose is to demonstrate not only that virtue ethics is compatible with Christianity but also that Christian beliefs and practices actually can enhance and extend virtue ethics. While other books have assumed that virtue ethics is compatible with Christianity, Kotva's is the first to test that assumption.

Kotva begins by pointing out the incompleteness of most contemporary ethical systems and sketches the rediscovery of virtue ethics, which was originally proposed by Aristotle and subsequently extended and modified by Thomas Aquinas. Kotva skillfully describes neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics in terms of a three-part structure: (1) who we happen to be; (2) who we could become, and (3) the dispositions, skills, and inclinations that help us move from who

we are to who we could become. According to virtue ethics theory, moral rules and effects are useful adjuncts, but fostering ongoing character development and virtuous living is the central task of religious leaders. Kotva insists that a Christian virtue ethics, particularly an ecumenical one, is essential if we are to survive and flourish.

The chapter on "Theological Links" is a tour de force in which Kotva "makes the case for a Christian virtue ethics" by systematically demonstrating the high degree of concordance between basic Christian views of sanctification, Christology, and Christian anthropology and the basic tenets of virtue ethics.

I found the author's chapter on scripture, entitled "Biblical Connections," insightful and even exhilarating at certain points. Kotva not only shows that virtue ethics is compatible with the basic message of Matthew's gospel and Paul's letters; he also shows how these scriptures actually extend and correct the framework of virtue ethics.

Kotva deals with four common objections to virtue ethics in the chapter on "Theological and Biblical Objections": that it is too self-centered or narcissistic to be Christian, that it is aristocratic and conflicts with Christianity's egalitarian thrust and sense of justice, that it is sectarian and encourages withdrawal from the world's plight, and that deontology and consequentialism better reflect Christians' values convictions. He argues persuasively that the first three objections are incorrect. He concludes his discussion of the fourth objection by noting that rule-based and effects-focused ethical systems "are ill-equipped to express the full range of Christian concerns and modes of reasoning. . . . [and] either do not or cannot express various aspects of the moral vision arising from Christian scriptures and theology."

In short, *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics* is an excellent overview of virtue ethics with a decidedly Christian emphasis. Kotva is to be commended for the well-organized structure of the book and its accessible, engaging prose. Ministers in religious formation settings will find the chapters "Theological Links," "Biblical Connections," and "Theological and Biblical Objections" enlightening and particularly useful in working with ministry personnel in training.

If there is one criticism of the book, it would concern the author's inexactitude with regard to psychological concepts and language. His description and attributions about behaviorism are outdated to the point of being caricatures, and his use of the term "character" as synonymous with "temperament" on page 31 is incorrect. Otherwise, the book is a gem and is must reading for ministry personnel.

—Len Sperry, M.D., Ph.D.

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